



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 25 APR 2022

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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Nicaragua withdraws from OAS</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/25/nicaragua-withdraws-Organization-of-American-States/2761650855187/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/04/25/nicaragua-withdraws-Organization-of-American-States/2761650855187/</a>
GIST	<p>April 24 (UPI) -- Nicaragua announced Sunday that it has closed the offices of the Organization of American States and expelled its staff from within its borders, accusing it of being an instrument of U.S. meddling.</p> <p>Denis Moncada, the Nicaraguan foreign minister, announced the move in <a href="#">a surprise press conference</a> carried by local media months after he said Managua would end its membership in the 35-member bloc in the wake of its condemnation of President <a href="#">Daniel Ortega</a>'s election last year to a fourth term and subsequent crackdown on protesters.</p> <p>"Nicaragua is not a colony of anyone, therefore it is not part of a ministry of colonies," the government said in a statement, referring to the OAS as a "diabolical instrument."</p> <p>"By confirming our irrevocable denunciation and resignation, in the face of this calamitous, truculent and lying dependency of the State Department of Yankee imperialism, we also communicate that as of this date we cease to be part of all the deceitful mechanisms of this monstrosity," it said.</p> <p>The statement also was used for Nicaragua to ratify its "respect, affection and recognition" of Cuba and Venezuela, with Venezuela President Nicolas Mauro issuing <a href="#">his own statement</a> congratulating Managua for withdrawing from the OAS.</p> <p>"In its action against Nicaragua, the OAS reiterated its historical role as an instrument of U.S. imperialism, to attack the sovereign will of its people, attack its security and national interest," Mauro said. "Nicaragua acts as a result of the historic struggle of resistance carried out by its will to build a true democratic multilateralism that promotes peace, respect of self-determination and sincere cooperation in the search for social justice and common welfare."</p> <p>In <a href="#">a statement</a> late Sunday, OAS Secretary General Luis Almagro said that while Nicaragua has signaled it will leave the bloc, it may not do so until the end of next year.</p> <p>"In the meantime, Nicaragua is a full member of the organization and must fulfill all its commitments," he said, demanding that Managua "respect the obligations that today govern its relationship with the OAS and with any international organization of which Nicaragua is a part."</p>

	<p>Moncada had announced Nov. 19 that Nicaragua would withdraw from the organization, days after the OAS member states <a href="#">voted</a> to condemn the elections early that month as "not free, fair or transparent and have no democratic legitimacy."</p> <p>In March, Nicaragua's ambassador to the OAS, Arturo McFields, resigned while condemning his government before <a href="#">the OAS permanent council</a>.</p> <p>The United States and the European Union as well as other democratic nations have imposed sanctions against Nicaragua and its officials over Ortega's election win and following suppression activities.</p> <p>Last week, OAS members <a href="#">voted to suspend</a> Russia's participation in the group as a permanent observer over its war in Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Russia warns US on arming Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-warned-united-states-against-sending-more-arms-ukraine-2022-04-25/">https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-warned-united-states-against-sending-more-arms-ukraine-2022-04-25/</a>
GIST	<p>LONDON, April 25 (Reuters) - Russia has warned the United States against sending more arms to Ukraine, Moscow's ambassador to Washington told Russian state television.</p> <p>"We stressed the unacceptability of this situation when the United States of America pours weapons into Ukraine, and we demanded an end to this practice," Anatoly Antonov said in an interview with the Rossiya 24 TV channel.</p> <p>Antonov said an official diplomatic note had been sent to Washington expressing Russia's concerns. He said such arms supplies from the United States would further aggravate the situation and raised the stakes of the conflict.</p> <p>Washington's top diplomat and its defence secretary met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy in Kyiv late on Sunday, pledging new assistance worth \$713 million for Zelenskiy's government and other countries in the region fearing Russian aggression.</p> <p>Earlier in April, U.S. President Joe Biden announced an additional \$800 million in military assistance to Ukraine, expanding the scope of the systems provided to include heavy artillery.</p> <p>Zelenskiy has been pleading with U.S. and European leaders to supply Kyiv with heavier arms and equipment. Thousands have been killed and millions displaced since Russia sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24 in what it calls a "special military operation" to "demilitarise" its neighbouring country.</p> <p>Russia's Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine has killed thousands of people, displaced millions and raised fears of a wider confrontation between Russia and the United States - by far the world's two biggest nuclear powers.</p> <p>President Vladimir Putin says the "special military operation" in Ukraine is necessary because the United States was using Ukraine to threaten Russia and Moscow had to defend against the persecution of Russian-speaking people</p> <p>Ukraine and the West say Russia began an unprovoked war of aggression.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Study: 29% hospitalized avoid long Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/study-covid-19-hospitalizations-pandemic/2022/04/24/id/1067023/">https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/study-covid-19-hospitalizations-pandemic/2022/04/24/id/1067023/</a>
GIST	Just 29% of those hospitalized in Great Britain for COVID-19 have been reported to be fully recovered after one year, according to a new study.

The findings flash a warning long COVID is going to be a common condition, [Channel News Asia \(CNA\) reported Sunday](#).

The study also found long COVID to be more prevalent in women than in men, obese people were half as likely to fully recover, and those who required a ventilator were 58% less likely to fully recover in a year.

The study analyzed 2,300 COVID-19 patients who were discharged from 39 British hospitals between March 2020-April 2021, reviewing 807 of them five months and one year post-hospitalization, according to the study published in the Lancet Respiratory Medicine journal.

Just 26% in the study fully recovered in five months and just 28.9% were fully well after one year, according to the report.

"The limited recovery from five months to one year after hospitalizations in our study across symptoms, mental health, exercise capacity, organ impairment and quality of life is striking," according to study co-leader Rachel Evans of the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

The symptoms most common for those long haulers were: fatigue, muscle pain, poor sleep, slowing down physically, and breathlessness.

"Without effective treatments, long COVID could become a highly prevalent new long-term condition," according to study co-lead Christopher Brightling of the University of Leicester.

The study remains ongoing and will revisit the health status of the subjects. The findings are going to be presented to European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, CNA reported.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 US: Russia aim failing, Ukraine succeeds</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-lloyd-austin-57bc9d50afe136ad520f13e85c15a3c8">https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-zelenskyy-kyiv-business-lloyd-austin-57bc9d50afe136ad520f13e85c15a3c8</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Top American officials pledged Monday to help ensure Ukraine wins its fight against Russia following face-to-face talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, while Britain said Moscow has yet to achieve a significant breakthrough in its offensive in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland.</p> <p>In meetings with Zelenskyy, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the United States had approved a \$165 million sale of ammunition for Ukraine's war effort, along with more than \$300 million in foreign military financing.</p> <p>"The strategy that we've put in place — massive support for Ukraine, massive pressure against Russia, solidarity with more than 30 countries engaged in these efforts — is having real results," Blinken told reporters in Poland the day after meeting with Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials.</p> <p>"When it comes to Russia's war aims, Russia is failing. Ukraine is succeeding. Russia has sought as its principal aim to totally subjugate Ukraine, to take away its sovereignty, to take away its independence. That has failed."</p> <p>As fighting continued, Russia struck deep into Ukraine, targeting infrastructure far from the front line, according to Ukrainian and Russian reports.</p> <p>In a series of strikes on Ukraine's railways, a Russian missile hit one facility near Krasne, outside the western city of Lviv, early Monday, sparking a fire, the region's governor said. A total of five railways facilities in central and western Ukraine were hit by Russian strikes, said Oleksandr Kamyshin, the head of the state-run Ukrainian Railways.</p>

Meanwhile, Serhiy Borzov, the governor of Ukraine's central Vinnytsia region, said there were casualties after rocket strikes targeting "critical infrastructure." It was not clear if those strikes were related to the attacks on the railways.

Russia also destroyed an oil refinery in Kremenchuk in central Ukraine, along with fuel depots there, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Monday.

He added that other strikes by long-range missiles overnight hit concentrations of troops and weapons and ammunition depots in Barvinkove and Nova Dmytrivka in the Kharkiv region, near the Russian border. In all, he said Russian warplanes destroyed 56 Ukrainian targets.

To Ukraine's north, in the Russian region of Bryansk, a fire erupted early Monday at an oil depot, but no immediate cause was given for the blaze in oil storage tanks.

NASA satellites that track fires showed something burning at coordinates that corresponded to a Rosneft facility some 110 kilometers (70 miles) north of the Ukrainian border. Moscow previously has blamed Ukraine for attacks in Bryansk.

Following the meeting with Blinken and Austin, Zelenskyy said he was "very thankful" for the American aid and particularly praised U.S. President Joe Biden for his "personal support."

"The priorities are weapons and support from the United States of America and our partners, European leaders, in terms of our army's strength and support in certain areas," the Ukrainian president said. "The second issue is the sanctions policy against the Russian Federation because of the full-scale invasion and all the terror they have committed in Ukraine."

The three-hour meeting came Sunday, the 60th day since the start of the invasion, as Ukraine pressed the West for more powerful weapons against Russia's campaign in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine, where Moscow's forces sought to dislodge the last Ukrainian troops in the battered port city of Mariupol.

Britain's Ministry of Defense said Monday that Ukrainian troops holed up in a steel plant in the strategic city were tying down Russian forces, and keeping them from being added to the offensive elsewhere in the Donbas.

"Many Russian units remain fixed in the city and cannot be redeployed," the ministry said in a statement posted on Twitter. "Ukraine's defense of Mariupol has also exhausted many Russian units and reduced their combat effectiveness."

The ministry added that, so far, Russia has only made "minor advances in some areas since shifting its focus to fully occupying the Donbas."

"Without sufficient logistical and combat support enablers in place, Russia has yet to achieve a significant breakthrough," the ministry said.

With Russia's shift in focus, Austin said Ukraine's military needs are changing, and Zelenskyy is now focused on more tanks, artillery and other munitions.

"The nature of the fight has evolved, because the terrain they're now focused on is a different type of terrain, so they need long-range fires," Austin said.

Asked about what the U.S. sees as success, Austin said that "we want to see Ukraine remain a sovereign country, a democratic country able to protect its sovereign territory, we want to see Russia weakened to the point where it can't do things like invade Ukraine."

On the diplomatic front, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was scheduled to travel to Turkey on Monday and then Moscow and Kyiv. Zelenskyy said it was a mistake for Guterres to visit Russia before Ukraine.

“Why? To hand over signals from Russia? What should we look for?” Zelenskyy said Saturday. “There are no corpses scattered on the Kutuzovsky Prospect,” he said, referring to one of Moscow’s main avenues.

Blinken said he had spoken with Guterres on Friday ahead of the trip.

“Our expectation is that he’s going to carry a very strong and clear message to Vladimir Putin, which is the need to end this war now,” he said.

In a boost in support for Ukraine, French President Emmanuel Macron comfortably won a second term Sunday over far-right challenger Marine Le Pen, who had pledged to dilute France’s ties with the European Union and NATO. Le Pen had also spoken out against EU sanctions on Russian energy and had faced scrutiny during the campaign over her previous friendliness with the Kremlin.

Since failing to capture Kyiv, the Russians have aimed to gain full control over the Donbas, the eastern industrial heartland, where Moscow-backed separatists controlled some territory before the war.

For the Donbas offensive, Russia has reassembled troops who fought around Kyiv and in northern Ukraine. The British Ministry of Defense said Ukrainian forces had repelled numerous assaults in the past week and “inflicted significant cost on Russian forces.”

In the south of the Donbas, in the strategic port city of Mariupol, a small pocket of Ukrainian troops continues to hold out against Russian forces in the Azovstal steel factory, a sprawling facility on the waterfront.

Mariupol has endured fierce fighting since the start of the war because of its location on the Sea of Azov. Its capture would deprive Ukraine of a vital port, free up Russian troops to fight elsewhere, and allow Moscow to establish a land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which it seized from Ukraine in 2014.

Over the weekend, Russian forces launched fresh airstrikes on the steel plant in an attempt to dislodge the estimated 2,000 fighters inside. An estimated 1,000 civilians are also sheltering in the factory.

New satellite images by Planet Labs PBC, taken Sunday, show destroyed buildings across the steelworks and smoke rising from one area. Roofs have gaping holes; a soccer field is cratered from incoming fire.

More than 100,000 people — down from a prewar population of about 430,000 — are believed to remain in Mariupol with scant food, water or heat. Ukrainian authorities estimate more than 20,000 civilians have been killed. Recent satellite images showed what appeared to be mass graves to the west and east of Mariupol.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Rise in abuse, officials flee youth sports</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/covid-sports-health-youth-football-5db4156110f035c65bbcf3f5981dc576">https://apnews.com/article/covid-sports-health-youth-football-5db4156110f035c65bbcf3f5981dc576</a>
GIST	<p>ATLANTA (AP) — When one looks at the <a href="#">ugly bruise</a> encircling Kristi Moore’s left eye, it’s not surprising so many refs and umps are hanging up their stripes.</p> <p>Why put up with incessant taunts and threats from out-of-control parents?</p> <p>Why fret over potential violence — even the chance of losing your life — because someone thinks you blew a call at a 12-year-olds’ softball game?</p>



America is facing a crisis in prep and youth sports, where fewer and fewer people are willing to take on the thankless job of officiating games.

“The veterans are quitting by the droves. They’re sick of it,” said Moore, who oversees fast-pitch softball umpires for the state of Mississippi as well as the city of Laurel. “When we work to recruit new people, get ’em trained, get ’em out there on the field, they’re three or four games in when someone gives them a good cussing out or an invitation to get their tail beat. They’re like: ‘You know what? I’ll go cut grass on the weekend.’”

[Moore can certainly understand](#) that sentiment.

A couple of weeks ago, she was umpiring a girls’ softball game. She rarely works on the field anymore but stepped in to the \$40-a-game gig because another umpire was ill.

On a play at second base, Moore called the runner safe. A parent watching the game thought the runner was out. She began screaming profanities, according to Moore, “accused me of cheating these kids.”

Moore ordered the woman to leave, which she only agreed to after the ump threatened to forfeit the game — but not before vowing to settle things later.

Moore didn’t think any more of it, having endured similar threats during her 10 years as a youth umpire. But as soon as the game ended, the enraged mother was waiting.

“I was maybe three steps off the field and she was there,” Moore recalled. “And that’s when she punched me.”

The woman was arrested and charged with simple assault.

In addition to the black eye, Moore said her injuries include nerve damage and a bruise inside her ear. All of that will heal with time.

The mental wounds will be more of a challenge. Moore has not been back on the field since the attack. She’s not sure if she ever will.

“In the back of my mind I’m like, ‘What if she had a knife in her bag and stabbed me? What if she went to her car and got a gun, then came back and shot me?’” Moore said. “It’s just scary.”

Barry Mano was appalled at what happened to Moore but not surprised.

As president of the National Association of Sports Officials, a group that advocates for referees and umpires in a wide range of sports at all levels, Mano hears similar stories pretty much every week.

That abuse is a big reason so many states are having trouble finding enough qualified officials to call the games that children play.

“And without us,” Mano pointed out, “it’s just recess.”

There are almost daily reports around the country about how dire the situation has become:

— At Fishers High School in suburban Indianapolis, the junior varsity baseball team already called off a pair of games. “This is second time this spring we have canceled high school level game on sunny, dry day because we did not have umpires available!” the school tweeted.

— A couple of years ago, just before the pandemic started, the state of Michigan had roughly 13,000 registered high school officials, Mano said. That number is 8,900 today.

— Tennessee’s high school association has requested all members play at least one football game on Thursday night next season to help alleviate a shortage of referees. That way, a single crew can call games on back-to-back nights.

“All we can do is ask teams if they can play on Thursday night,” said Bill Marbet, a longtime high school ref who is now an assigning officer for the Central Tennessee Football Officials Association. “If so, we can cover you. If not, sorry, we may not have enough officials.”

The Michigan decrease mirrors a nationwide trend, according to Mano, who puts the reduction of registered officials at somewhere between 25-30% since the start of the pandemic.

COVID-19 accelerated the problem, without question. It was not the root cause, however.

Many officials quit before the pandemic because of the abuse they were enduring from overzealous parents and fans. Then the games stopped, forcing others to consider their options. When play resumed, a significant number of those officials did not come back.

Major League Baseball umpires Lance Barksdale and Ted Barrett were outraged when they heard of the assault on Moore. They wanted to show their support, so through UMPS CARE Charities they invited her to the game they called Friday night in Atlanta between the World Series champion Braves and the Miami Marlins.

Barksdale, a Mississippi native, said the assault on Moore is just another example of why officials in all sports are increasingly in short supply.

“I’m definitely concerned about it,” he said. “Until people are held accountable and we stop allowing them to act any way want to, we’re going to continue to have shortages. People are getting tired of it.”

Barrett theorized that the rise of travel teams in baseball — not to mention AAU teams in basketball and specialized camps for young football players — has caused parents to feel much more invested in their kids’ athletic careers, both financially and emotionally.

“Parents have this sense of entitlement,” Barrett said. “They’re paying so much money, they think they should have better umpires.”

Mano’s organization is pushing for laws that would make the assault of an official a felony. Already, 23 states have passed those statutes, but Mississippi isn’t one of them.

Even more importantly, there needs to be a change in attitude. Coaches should make it clear they won’t tolerate such behavior from parents or their kids are off the team. And in the stands, fellow parents can’t sit by idly when one of their own is hurling insults at the officials.

“We can always take the bad actors into court and hammer the crap out of them,” Mano said. “But more than that is the culture here. Parents and fans and administrators and league directors have to understand that we’re not going to permit this type of behavior.

“Even if a call is egregiously wrong, that’s exactly the point. That shows the world who we are. We can’t have a world that turns on the rightness and wrongness of calls.”

While Moore hasn’t decided if she’ll ever call another game, she has been encouraged by the support she’s received from referees and umpires all over the world.

If anything, maybe this will be a turning point in the war on officials — a war that will eventually make losers of us all.



	"I didn't ask to be the poster child for officials' abuse, but here I am," Moore said. "My prayer is that moving forward, something good will come from this and we begin to change across all sports in how we treat our officials."
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Foreign investors ditching China</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/25/investing/china-capital-outflows-covid-ukraine-war-intl-mic-hnk/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/25/investing/china-capital-outflows-covid-ukraine-war-intl-mic-hnk/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>Hong Kong (CNN Business)</b> Investors are ditching China at an unprecedented scale as a cocktail of political and business risks, and rising interest rates elsewhere, make the world's second biggest economy a less attractive place to keep their money.</p> <p>China witnessed \$17.5 billion worth of portfolio outflows last month, an all-time high, according to most recent data from the Institute of International Finance (IIF). The US-based trade association called this capital flight by overseas investors "unprecedented," especially as there were no similar outflows from other emerging markets during this period. The outflows included \$11.2 billion in bonds, while the rest were equities.</p> <p>Data from the Chinese government also showed a record bond-market retreat by foreign investors in recent months. Overseas investors offloaded a net 35 billion yuan (\$5.5 billion) of Chinese government bonds in February, the largest monthly reduction on record, according to China Central Depository and Clearing. The sell-off accelerated in March, hitting a new high of 52 billion yuan (\$8.1 billion).</p> <p>"China's support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine was clearly the catalyst for capital to leave China," said George Magnus, an associate at the China Centre at Oxford University and former chief economist for UBS.</p> <p><b>Geopolitical risks</b>  China and Russia <a href="#">proclaimed</a> in February that their friendship had "no limits." That was before Russia <a href="#">invaded Ukraine</a>. Now, with Russia's economy being slammed with sanctions from all over the world, Beijing has not rushed to help out its northern neighbor, <a href="#">fearing that it too could get caught up in sanctions</a>. But it has also <a href="#">refused to condemn</a> Russia's attack on Ukraine, seeking to <a href="#">portray itself as a neutral actor</a> and blaming <a href="#">the situation on the United States</a>.</p> <p>"There is nervousness about China's ambiguous, but Russia-leaning stance on the Ukraine conflict, which raises worries that China could be targeted by sanctions if it helps Russia," said Martin Chorzempa, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, who has studied China's economy and US-China relations.</p> <p>The war in Ukraine has also heightened concerns about the risk that China could increase its military force against Taiwan, triggering a massive flight of capital from the Asian island.</p> <p>But geopolitical tension is not the only reason behind the exodus. The rate hike in the United States and China's strict Covid-related lockdowns have also played a role in scaring investors.</p> <p>The US Federal Reserve is increasing interest rates for the first time since 2018 to tame inflation, while the People's Bank of China has entered an easing cycle to bolster its faltering economy. That means China looks less attractive to investors when compared with the United States. Earlier this month, yields on China's 10-year government bond fell below US Treasury yields for the first time in 12 years. And the yuan hit a six-month low against the US dollar.</p> <p>"The rise in interest rates, especially in the US, makes the nominal return associated with Chinese fixed income assets less attractive on a relative basis," Chorzempa said.</p> <p>Furthermore, Beijing's unwavering commitment to its zero Covid policy has taken a massive economic toll, and increased uncertainties about future growth.</p>

"The economy is enfeebled and being made worse by government actions and by zero Covid policies," said Magnus.

China's economy slowed sharply in March — consumption slumped for the first time in more than a year, while unemployment in 31 major cities surged to a record high — as escalating Covid lockdowns in Shanghai and other major cities severely hit growth and supply chains.

Some economists are even talking about the possibility of a recession this quarter, as Beijing looks determined to hold on to its zero Covid policy despite the hefty price.

A number of investment banks have slashed their forecasts for China's full-year growth in the past week. The International Monetary Fund on Tuesday cut its growth forecast for China to 4.4%, down from 4.8%, citing risks from Beijing's strict zero Covid policy. This is well below China's official forecast of around 5.5%.

### **Confusion about the future**

With these worries mounting, some fund managers and analysts have started questioning whether they should invest in China at all.

"China is seeing deep foreign capital outflows as doubts increase regarding its basic investability," said Brock Silvers, managing director for Kaiyuan Capital, a private equity investment firm based in Shanghai.

The pandemic is not the only reason behind China's slowdown. A lot of the country's current economic pain can be traced back to the sweeping regulatory crackdown on the private sector, which was unleashed by President Xi Jinping in 2020. There are fears that the government will continue to clampdown on sectors ranging from education to technology this year.

"Global investors don't want to play regulatory guessing games or worry that tomorrow's news may deplete another otherwise attractive company or business model," Silvers said.

The speed and ferocity with which authorities have acted against private enterprise have startled even the closest China watchers.

A set of rules unveiled last July essentially shut down the \$120 billion private tutoring industry, putting tens of thousands of companies out of business. Another decision by regulators to ban Didi — the country's biggest ride-hailing app — days after its US IPO stunned international investors and cost them dearly. The crackdown resulted in a steep sell-off in Chinese stocks worldwide.

The Nasdaq Golden Dragon index, a popular index that tracks more than 90 US-listed Chinese companies, lost 31% in the third quarter of 2021, the worst quarter on record. It then shed another 14% in the final quarter of last year. By comparison, the S&P 500 rose 0.2% and 11% respectively in the third and fourth quarters of last year. The Nasdaq Composite also surged 8% in the final quarter of 2021.

Some of the money flowing out of China may have gone into US dollar assets, while there is also "a notable switch from China to India," according to Qi Wang, chief investment officer for MegaTrust Investment in Hong Kong.

### **Shrinking appetite**

The crackdown on the private sector has also impacted private equity funds that focus on China.

Funds that raise US dollars to invest in China only attracted \$1.4 billion in the first quarter of 2022, down 70% from the previous quarter, according to Preqin, a London-based investment data firm.

A separate survey by Bain & Company showed that Greater China-focused private equity funds attracted \$28 billion in new funding for the second half of last year, down 54% from the first half, as global investors are increasingly concerned about political and economic uncertainty in the Chinese market.

"Looking ahead, about 55% of respondents expect the [fundraising] situation to be more challenging in next 12 months," said Kai Zhong, a manager on the China Private Equity team at Bain & Company.

### **On the fence**

However, while bond and equity funds may be slashing their exposure to China, there's evidence that global companies are continuing to invest in Chinese businesses.

Foreign direct investment inflows to China hit a record high of \$173 billion in 2021, up 20% from the previous year, according to data from China's Ministry of Commerce.

Chorzempa noted that the record FDI came even though "the regulatory uncertainty and a darkening view among policymakers outside of China was already highly salient."

"So it is not clear whether the data from the last two months represents a paradigm shift or more of a temporary recalibration to a still very strong investment relationship, especially with Europe," he said.

According to an annual survey conducted by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China last year, only 9% of nearly 600 European companies operating in China planned on shifting any current or planned investment out of China, the lowest share on record.

Still, there are signs that some of them have become anxious about China's zero Covid policy.

Earlier this week, China's commerce minister Wang Wentao met with a few foreign chambers to discuss the impact of the country's zero Covid policy.

Jens Hildebrandt, executive director of the German Chamber of Commerce in North China, told CNN Business that the participants raised some pressing issues member companies are facing related to the Covid-containment strategy, especially in Shanghai.

An ongoing lockdown in Shanghai — a major business and manufacturing hub — has forced most businesses to shut down for weeks, threatening to disrupt key supply chains for autos and electronics. It has also made port delays worse and forced the suspension of many passenger flights, sending air freight rates soaring and putting even more pressure on global supply chains.

"The current policy with lockdowns leading to productions stops, logistic and supply chain disruptions and restrictions on the movement of people do not only pose a short-term concern, but will leave their marks on the long run," Hildebrandt said in an emailed response to CNN Business.

"As foreign companies are suffering economically, we are looking for clear signals on how the Chinese government will help to ease the burden through relief programs," he added.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Russia keeps losing armored vehicles</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-russia-armored-vehicles-lost/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ukraine-russia-armored-vehicles-lost/</a>
GIST	<p>As Ukraine attempts to evacuate civilians from <a href="#">Mariupol</a>, including some who remain trapped inside a steel plant, Russian forces have claimed victory in the city. But Russia's recent defeats in and around Kyiv expose unresolved weaknesses, starting with Russia's armored vehicles.</p> <p>To date, <a href="#">Ukraine</a> says Russia has lost close to 3,000 armored vehicles — but only half in combat.</p>

<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<p>"It's not good military leadership if you are losing so many men and so much equipment," Ukrainian military expert Yuri Zbanatski told CBS News' Chris Livesay.</p> <p>In the city of Bucha, a graveyard of Russian tanks remain behind — damaged by artillery, fragments and explosions.</p> <p>Oryx, a military and intelligence blog which counts Russia's military losses in Ukraine on the basis of photographs sent from the war zone, reports that Russia has lost more than 460 tanks.</p> <p>"They [the tanks] were abandoned or ran out of fuel, and it's finders keepers for these farmers," Zbanatski said. "Their personnel is not properly trained. Their commanding officers are not able to plan their offensive operations properly."</p> <p>Russia's power is now being tested in the eastern Donbas region. The urban environment around Kyiv that gave Ukraine's fighters defensive shelter is now gone and replaced with open terrain and long-range artillery – including dozens of howitzers that Ukraine received from the United States.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Russia military paid high price for Mariupol</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/22/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#russias-military-paid-a-high-price-for-the-kremlins-victory-in-the-ruined-city-of-mariupol">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/22/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#russias-military-paid-a-high-price-for-the-kremlins-victory-in-the-ruined-city-of-mariupol</a>
GIST	<p>As soldiers and civilians trapped in bunkers beneath a sprawling steel plant in Mariupol issued desperate pleas for help on Friday, military analysts said that it might take days or even weeks for the heavily battered Russian forces who now control most of the city to regroup and join Moscow's offensive in the eastern Donbas region.</p> <p>The Kremlin on Thursday declared "victory" in the now ruined city even though Ukrainian forces still held the Azovstal steel plant near Mariupol's port. President Vladimir V. Putin ordered his forces not to storm the plant but rather to block it "so that a fly cannot pass through."</p> <p>A final assault on the plant would have almost surely resulted in further casualties for Russia in a campaign that military analysts and Ukrainian officials say has already taken a heavy toll.</p> <p>Mariupol, a strategic port city, was targeted on the first day of Russia's invasion two months ago. It has been surrounded by Russian forces for some 50 days and been the scene of some of the most intense fighting of the war.</p> <p>While the defenders of the city are now confined to the steel plant, Ukrainians and western military analysts said that in weeks of fighting they killed high-ranking Russian soldiers and many members of elite Russian fighting units.</p> <p>Even as the city around them was reduced to rubble, Ukrainian soldiers continued to ambush and attack Russians entering the city. It is impossible to know exactly how many Russian soldiers were killed in the battle but the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think-tank, said they suffered "high casualties."</p> <p>"Russian forces involved in the battle of Mariupol are likely heavily damaged and Ukrainian forces succeeded in tying down and degrading a substantial Russian force," according to the group's analysis.</p> <p>The British military defense intelligence agency said on Friday that the decision to blockade the Azovstal plant "likely indicates a desire to contain Ukrainian resistance in Mariupol and free up Russian forces to be deployed elsewhere in eastern Ukraine."</p> <p>Western military officials estimate that there were about 12 Russian battalion tactical groups in the city at the start of the week. At full strength, the battalions consist of between 700 to 1,000 soldiers. It is highly</p>

	<p>unlikely the Russian battalions who fought in the city remain at full strength, according to the Institute for the Study of War.</p> <p>Some portion of the Russian forces will be needed for missions outside the eastern offensive.</p> <p>The raging fight in Mariupol has left an estimated 95 percent of the structures in the city destroyed or so damaged that they will likely need to be torn down, and Russia will need soldiers to secure the ruins and clear out any remaining pockets of resistance. Other soldiers might be needed to maintain control of southern Ukraine.</p> <p>And despite the Kremlin's claim of victory, the Russians must now maintain their siege of the steel plant.</p> <p>Iryna Vereshchuk, the Ukrainian deputy prime minister, said Friday that the Russian army had made it clear that they would not let civilians leave the plant unless the soldiers inside surrender first. She estimated that around 1,000 civilians, many of them "women, children and the elderly," were still inside the plant. While Russia opened a corridor for soldiers to surrender, she said, it has not guaranteed safe passage out for civilians.</p> <p>"The Russians refuse to open a corridor for civilians, cynically pretending that they do not understand the difference between a corridor for the military to surrender and a humanitarian corridor to evacuate the civilians," she wrote on Telegram. "But they do understand it all. It's just that they are trying to lay extra pressure on our military."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 US withholds sanctions on Putin's girlfriend</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-withholds-sanctions-on-a-very-close-putin-associate-his-alleged-girlfriend-11650816894?mod=hp_lead_pos8">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-withholds-sanctions-on-a-very-close-putin-associate-his-alleged-girlfriend-11650816894?mod=hp_lead_pos8</a>
GIST	<p>Several weeks have passed since the U.S. and its allies first imposed sanctions on Russia's biggest companies and its <a href="#">business and political leaders</a>, all the way up to President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a>.</p> <p>Yet one person has been spared, in a last-minute decision: Alina Kabaeva, the woman the U.S. government believes to be Mr. Putin's girlfriend and the mother of at least three of his children.</p> <p>Ms. Kabaeva, a former Olympic champion rhythmic gymnast known in the sport for her extreme flexibility and an international doping scandal, is suspected of playing a role in hiding Mr. Putin's personal wealth overseas, U.S. officials said, and remains a potential sanctions target.</p> <p>The belief among U.S. officials debating the move is that sanctioning Ms. Kabaeva would be deemed so personal a blow to Mr. Putin that it could further escalate tensions between Russia and the U.S. The 69-year-old Mr. Putin has never acknowledged a relationship with Ms. Kabaeva, a 39-year-old former cover model for Russian Vogue.</p> <p>The U.S. Treasury Department, which according to U.S. officials prepared the sanctions package against Ms. Kabaeva, now on hold, declined to comment. U.S. officials said that the action against Ms. Kabaeva isn't off the table.</p> <p>The Kremlin has long denied any relationship between Mr. Putin and Ms. Kabaeva. Mr. Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, didn't respond to requests for comment. Ms. Kabaeva, who has denied a relationship with Mr. Putin, couldn't be reached for comment.</p> <p>In 2008, Mr. Putin said in response to newspaper reports of his alleged relationship with Ms. Kabaeva: "I have always disliked those who, with their snotty noses and erotic fantasies, break into other people's private affairs."</p>

Mr. Putin lives a near-monastic lifestyle dedicated to public service and with almost no time for a personal life, according to portrayals of him in Russian state media. The Russian leader has two daughters from his past marriage to Ludmilla Shkrebnova—Katerina Tikhonova, 35, and Maria Vorontsova, 36.

On Saturday, Ms. Kabaeva made a rare public appearance at Moscow's VTB Arena to present a rhythmic gymnastics performance for the "Alina" festival, a gymnastics exhibition named for her. She stood in front of a billboard covered in "Z" logos, the symbol for support of Russia's military operations in Ukraine.

"Every family has a war-related story, and we must pass these stories to next generations," she said. Russian gymnastics would become stronger because of international isolation, she added: "We will only win from this."

The Alina festival is scheduled to be broadcast in May, part of celebrations to commemorate Russia's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. Russian analysts have said Mr. Putin could use the celebration to proclaim a military victory in Ukraine.

The U.S. has imposed sanctions on Mr. Putin's two adult daughters. Moving against Ms. Kabaeva, described by the U.S. government as Mr. Putin's "mistress," is among the actions deemed confrontational enough to further complicate efforts for a negotiated peace in Ukraine, officials said.

The Treasury and State departments typically work together to prepare sanctions packages, incorporating intelligence and other information. The National Security Council often has to sign off before a package is announced. In Ms. Kabaeva's case, the Treasury department had prepared the sanctions against her, but the NSC made an 11th hour decision to pull her name from a list set to be announced.

"We have prepared sanctions on a number of people who haven't yet been sanctioned, and we continue to think about when to impose those sanctions for maximum impact," a U.S. official said in response to questions from The Wall Street Journal.

Ms. Kabaeva and her family have been enriched by connections to people in Mr. Putin's inner circle, according to U.S. officials. A classified U.S. intelligence assessment during the investigation into alleged Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. election, names Ms. Kabaeva as a beneficiary of Mr. Putin's wealth, according to a U.S. official familiar with the report.

A representative of jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny urged U.S. lawmakers on April 6 to impose sanctions on Ms. Kabaeva, claiming she was allegedly helping to hide Mr. Putin's personal wealth. The representative didn't provide any evidence during her congressional testimony.

Western officials say they don't know Ms. Kabaeva's exact position in the Kremlin power structure. Debate over imposing sanctions on her reflects the view by many Western officials about Mr. Putin's personal grip on power—that a former gymnast could be one of the country's most influential figures because of her proximity to the Russian leader.

Ms. Kabaeva has stayed in Switzerland for long stretches of time, according to U.S. and European security officials. U.S. officials briefed on Ms. Kabaeva's movements said she had lived in a high-walled mansion with a helipad in Cologny, near Geneva. A U.S. official said Mr. Putin's associates conducted business there, arriving and leaving by helicopter.

Ms. Kabaeva was rarely spotted in Cologny, a secluded spot for billionaires and sports stars in the hills above Lake Geneva, officials said.

The Ukraine government has stepped up calls on the West to pursue actions against her. Ukraine's parliament this month wrote to the government of Switzerland demanding it ban Ms. Kabaeva from the country and seize any real estate she owns. The Swiss government said it had no indication she was in the country.

### **Signature move**

Ms. Kabaeva was born in Uzbekistan and left high school early to pursue her sport. She was 21 when she won a gold medal in rhythmic gymnastics at the 2004 Olympics in Athens. She became a national star, known for a signature move, which was named the “Kabaeva” in the rhythmic gymnastics rulebook. That earned her the informal title of “Russia’s most flexible woman.”

Some of the sport’s purists viewed her extreme contortions as a gimmick. Yet she won 21 European Championship medals, 14 World Championship medals and two Olympic medals, including a bronze at the 2000 Sydney Games.

In 2001, Ms. Kabaeva was stripped of her medals at the world championships in Madrid after testing positive for a banned diuretic. She claimed the substance came from tainted pills she bought at a nearby pharmacy. Ms. Kabaeva served a one-year ban and returned to win the following World Championships and the gold medal in Athens.

Her name was first mentioned on the Kremlin website in 2001. Mr. Putin attended a sports show and was photographed with Ms. Kabaeva, who was 18.

The Moskovsky Korrespondent, a Russian tabloid, reported in 2008 that Mr. Putin, who was married at the time, and Ms. Kabaeva were engaged. The daily newspaper was shut down days later by its owner, National Media Co. after Mr. Putin furiously denied the story.

Around that time, Ms. Kabaeva retired from gymnastics and entered politics as a lawmaker for Mr. Putin’s ruling United Russia party. She received a salary of 11 million rubles, about \$140,000.

Ms. Kabaeva left parliament in 2014 to become chairwoman of Russia’s New Media Group, which controls major pro-government TV, radio and news websites. She was appointed by NMG owner Yuri Kovalchuk, the largest shareholder in Rossiya Bank.

U.S. officials have sanctioned Rossiya, alleging it was used by Mr. Putin’s close associates. Ms. Kabaeva’s annual salary in 2018 was the equivalent of around \$12 million, according to leaked documents from Russia’s Federal Tax Service.

NMG removed her name and picture from its website on April 6, shortly before the latest round of sanctions. NMG didn’t respond to requests for comment, and Ms. Kabaeva didn’t respond to questions submitted to the company.

Since around 2013, Ms. Kabaeva and her relatives have acquired six apartments, two houses and acres of land in four of Russia’s most exclusive regions, according to data from Russia’s land registry, Rosreestr.

Among those properties, Ms. Kabaeva’s 87-year old grandmother and Ms. Kabaeva’s mother and sister took title of luxury homes from businessmen close to Mr. Putin, including a 2,300 square-foot property in St. Petersburg, as well as luxury apartments on a high-end Moscow street and in the resort town of Sochi, according to the land registry. The family members didn’t respond to a request for comment emailed to Ms. Kabaeva’s company.

### **Carrying a torch**

In 2013, Mr. Putin announced he had separated from Ms. Shkrebnova, his wife of 30 years and a former Aeroflot cabin crew member. “It was a joint decision,” he said. “We hardly see each other, each of us has our own life.”

Their divorce was completed the following year. Ms. Kabaeva was interviewed on state television afterward and said she had met someone “whom I love very much.” She declined to share the person’s name.



Media reports of a romantic relationship flared when Ms. Kabaeva was selected as a torchbearer at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Mr. Putin, responding to media speculation that he had personally picked Ms. Kabaeva, told reporters he wouldn't "interfere in the process."

Swiss, U.S. and European officials said Ms. Kabaeva traveled to Switzerland and gave birth to Mr. Putin's child in 2015. She stayed in one of Europe's most expensive maternity clinics—the Sant'Anna—overlooking Lake Lugano. When Mr. Putin wasn't seen in public for eight days around that time, his spokesman, Mr. Peskov, addressed rumors that the president was with Ms. Kabaeva: "Information about the birth of a baby fathered by Vladimir Putin doesn't correspond to reality," he said.

Following the birth, Ms. Kabaeva spent more of her time in Switzerland, at both a luxury residence in Lugano, overlooking the city's mountain lake, and the high-walled compound in Cologny, U.S. and European officials said.

In 2019, Ms. Kabaeva gave birth to twins in Moscow, U.S. officials said, though it wasn't officially reported. The website of newspaper Moskovsky Komsomolets, owned by one of Mr. Putin's closest friends, published a news item about the twins. The article, which didn't name a father, was quickly removed.

In the weeks following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, media reports that Ms. Kabaeva had resided in Switzerland made big news in the historically neutral Alpine nation. The Swiss Federal Department of Justice and Police released a statement saying, "We have no indication of the presence of this person in Switzerland." It made no mention of Ms. Kabaeva by name.

In March, Switzerland announced it had frozen \$6.17 billion worth of Russian assets covered by sanctions, a fraction of the approximately \$213 billion worth of Russian wealth in the country, according to estimates by Switzerland's banking lobby. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, the agency overseeing sanctions, has faced criticism from the U.S. and Ukraine for not being able to handle calls to do more to bottle up Russian assets there.

The challenge is guessing what impact, if any, would come from imposing sanctions on Ms. Kabaeva, U.S. officials said of the continuing government deliberations in the matter. They acknowledged the sanctions wouldn't change the battlefield dynamics in Ukraine.

There is also the chance, said an official from the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control, that Mr. Putin would "respond in an aggressive way."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Report: China hunting down Uyghurs</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/china-hunting-down-uyghurs-around-083245412.html">https://news.yahoo.com/china-hunting-down-uyghurs-around-083245412.html</a>
GIST	<p>The Chinese government is not only <a href="#">mistreating Uyghurs within China's borders</a>, it is hunting them down abroad — with help from countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates — to clamp down on criticism of Beijing's repression of Muslim minorities.</p> <p>The scale of the Chinese Ministry of State Security's efforts to harass, detain and extradite Uyghurs from around the world, and the cooperation it is getting from governments in the Middle East and North Africa, is described in unprecedented detail in a new report, "Great Wall of Steel," by the Woodrow Wilson Center's Kissinger Institute on China and the United States.</p> <p>More than 5,500 Uyghurs outside of China have been targeted by Beijing, hit with cyberattacks and threats to family members who remain in China, and more than 1,500 Uyghurs have been detained or forced to return to China <a href="#">to face imprisonment and torture</a> in police custody, according to the report.</p> <p>"It is the first major study to place the Xinjiang humanitarian crisis in a global context, showing the international dimension of Beijing's campaign to suppress the Uyghurs," said the report's author, Bradley</p>

Jardine, a Schwartzman fellow at the Wilson Center and director of research at the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs.

The forced repatriations to China are ongoing.

On April 13, Saudi Arabia deported a Uyghur woman and her 13-year-old daughter to China, where they risk being detained in [the vast web of “re-education camps” in western China’s Xinjiang Province](#). The girl’s father and another Uyghur, a Muslim scholar, continue to be detained in the kingdom. It is unclear if any of them were formally charged.

Anthropologist Adrian Zenz, who has studied and documented Beijing’s systematic repression of Uyghurs, says Beijing is using economic might and gifts of infrastructure projects — its global [Belt and Road](#) initiative — to pressure countries, including those with majority Muslim populations that might be sympathetic to the Uyghurs’ plight.

“The Chinese are quite scared of what Muslim populations think of their treatment of the Uyghurs and have exerted particular effort in influencing government and popular opinion in those countries,” said Zenz, who is a senior fellow in China studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, a nonprofit based in Washington.

### **Camps for Uyghurs**

Chinese authorities in Xinjiang began rounding up women and men in 2017 — largely Muslims from the Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz ethnic minorities — and [detaining them in camps](#) designed to rid them of terrorist or extremist leanings.

From 1 million to 2 million Uyghurs and members of other minorities from Xinjiang are believed to be [held in the camps](#), where they are forced to study Marxism, renounce their religion, work in factories and face abuse, according to human rights groups and first-hand accounts. Beijing says these “re-education camps” provide vocational training and are necessary to fight extremism. The Chinese Embassy in Washington did not respond to a request for comment on this article.

According to the report, what scholars call “transnational repression,” ranging from online harassment to detention and extradition, has taken place in 44 countries, and Uyghurs have been threatened and intimidated in United States, Japan and across the European Union. More than 1,500 detentions and forced returns to China have occurred since 1997, more than 1,300 of them since 2014.

The report breaks down the repression into three distinct stages. From 1997 to 2007, 89 Uyghurs were detained or deported by local security services primarily in South and Central Asia. In the second phase, from 2008 to 2013, 126 Uyghurs were targeted primarily in Southeast Asia. And in the ongoing third phase, from 2014 to present, 1,364 Uyghurs have been detained, extradited or rendered from 18 countries concentrated in the Middle East and North Africa.

The report is based on a database built by Jardine in partnership with the Uyghur Human Rights Project and the Oxus Society for Central Asian Affairs called “China’s Transnational Repression of Uyghurs Dataset.” Researchers culled news reports and government documents and conducted interviews with Uyghurs to compile the comprehensive list of documented instances of persecution outside of China. Reporting by Jardine and NBC News indicates that the scale is likely more extensive than is officially reported.

The database includes 424 cases of Uyghurs forcibly returned to China, most since 2014, when the Chinese Communist Party launched its own “War on Terror.”

China’s secret service has relied on foreign governments in many cases and Interpol in some cases to help repatriate Uyghurs they wish to control, according to the report.

“This changes the Uyghur story by making clear that China is not only mistreating Uyghurs within China’s borders, but is also pursuing them internationally, through both legal and illegal channels, on a large scale,” said Robert Daly, director of the Wilson Center’s Kissinger Institute. “China is pursuing, harassing, and detaining Chinese Uyghurs around the world and returning them to China for punishment whenever possible.”

Many of the Uyghurs in the database have been detained and sent back to China without being charged with a crime, while others have faced accusations ranging from missing passports and visas to terrorism. Some were accused of making or associating with individuals who have made political statements critical of Beijing’s repressive policies in Xinjiang, while others were deported merely for having studied religion abroad. The database includes 60 documented cases of Uyghurs accused of promoting or partaking in separatism or terrorism or being linked to an extremist group.

In Morocco, a Uyghur human rights activist and journalist critical of China’s policies remains imprisoned following an Interpol red notice against him issued at Beijing’s request. While Interpol later withdrew its notice citing its bylaws forbidding persecution on political, religious or ethnic grounds, a Moroccan court approved an extradition request by China in 2021.

In a statement to NBC News, an Interpol spokesperson said that a “specialized task force” reviews every red notice request to ensure compliance with the organization’s rules, taking into account information available at the time of publication, and can re-examine any notice if new information emerges, as it did in the Morocco case. “[Interpol’s] General Secretariat is constantly reviewing, assessing and updating its procedures to ensure the greatest level of integrity in the system, and trust in its work,” the spokesperson said.

Saudi Arabia, which appears on China’s list of “suspicious” countries for Uyghurs to travel to, has increasingly cooperated with Beijing. Saudi authorities have deported at least six Uyghurs to China in the last four years who were either making pilgrimages to Mecca or living in the country legally, according to the report.

“This is complete callousness [on the part of Saudi Arabia] knowing what will happen to these Uyghurs when they get to China,” Zenz said. “The Chinese government wants to cleanse Uyghurs worldwide so that there are no pockets of Uyghurness outside of China’s borders that are not in line with Beijing’s narrative.”

In 2017 Egyptian police rounded up Uyghur students at a university in Cairo and deported them to China and elsewhere in the Middle East. Some escaped to Dubai only to face detention there, according to the report.

“I have learned from interviews with Uyghur sources in the UAE that Chinese police coordinated the Egypt crackdowns with Dubai. Uyghur students who attempted to flee to the UAE from Egypt were picked up as a part of this coordination,” Jardine wrote in the report.

In a statement emailed to NBC News, the UAE’s Strategic Communications Department wrote the UAE government “categorically rejects” the allegations, calling them “baseless.”

“The UAE follows all recognized global norms and procedures established by international organizations such as Interpol in the detainment, interrogation, and transfer of fugitives sought by foreign governments.”

In 2020, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE joined 42 other countries in signing a letter supporting China’s campaign of mass detention in the Xinjiang region.

The embassies of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Morocco did not respond to requests for comment.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/fbi-chief-says-espionage-threat-023202025.html">https://news.yahoo.com/fbi-chief-says-espionage-threat-023202025.html</a>
GIST	<p>FBI Director Christopher Wray said on Sunday that the current scale of espionage and cybersecurity threats from China were “unprecedented in history.”</p> <p>“The biggest threat we face as a country from a counterintelligence perspective is from the People’s Republic of China and especially the Chinese Communist Party,” Wray said during an interview on “60 Minutes.”</p> <p>“They are targeting our innovation, our trade secrets, our intellectual property, on a scale that’s unprecedented in history,” he added, noting that China’s hacking program is larger “than that of every other major nation combined.”</p> <p>“They have stolen more of Americans’ personal and corporate data than every nation combined,” he also said, adding that China’s targets span nearly every sector of the economy.</p> <p>When asked what the FBI was doing to defend against the vast attacks, Wray said investigations were moving at a rapid pace.</p> <p>“We are now moving at a pace where we’re opening a new China counterintelligence investigation about every 12 hours,” the FBI director said.</p> <p>“There’s well north of 2,000 of these investigations. All 56 of our field offices are engaged on it, and I can assure that it’s not because our agents don’t have enough else to do. It’s a measure of how significant the threat is.”</p> <p>In March, a private security firm, Mandiant, said that China hacked at least six state governments in the U.S. in the past year and revealed unknown vulnerabilities in the governments’ systems.</p> <p>Internationally, Ukraine also accused China of conducting a major cyberattack on the country’s military and nuclear facilities in the lead up to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 US buyers scour Eastern Europe factories</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/ukraine-pentagon-arms-buyers.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/ukraine-pentagon-arms-buyers.html</a>
GIST	<p>IN POLAND, NEAR THE UKRAINIAN BORDER — Just off a runway on a Polish airfield, forklifts busily emptied an Air Force C-17 transport jet of its cargo alongside a much smaller civilian propeller-driven plane, ferrying pallets of green boxes full of munitions from each to a nearby asphalt parking lot filling up with many dozens of them.</p> <p>Some bore American-made weapons, while others held a variety of ordnance made in Eastern Europe — all of them representative of Ukraine’s highest priorities for military aid that would soon be loaded into a fleet of waiting tractor-trailer trucks loitering nearby for the journey into Ukraine.</p> <p>The Pentagon sources much of the American-made weaponry it sends to Kyiv from its own stockpiles, but relies on American defense contractors to scour Eastern European munitions factories to find newly made weapons designed by the United States’ former adversary, the Soviet Union, to fulfill President Biden’s pledges of increased military aid for Ukraine.</p> <p>Ukraine still uses many weapons common to the Russian army, such as modern Kalashnikovs. And while Ukraine’s pleas for more sophisticated weaponry — such as Javelin anti-tank and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles — have received widespread attention, the country’s military has pressing needs for a wide range of munitions, including tens of millions of rounds for Soviet-era arms that are not on the cutting edge but are staples of the Ukrainian military.</p>

The Pentagon calls such arms, including rockets, artillery shells and ammunition for machine guns and assault rifles, “nonstandard ammunition” — given that the munitions are incompatible with those used by the United States and many allied nations, which are generally known as NATO-standard ammunition.

And since the Sept. 11 attacks, the Pentagon has been buying large amounts of such weapons through a variety of American defense firms to supply client armies in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and other countries that still rely on Soviet-designed arms.

One of those companies is the Ultra Defense Corp. in Tampa, Fla., which has about 60 employees and has built a bustling business working with factories in Romania, Bosnia, Serbia, Slovakia, Czech Republic and Bulgaria.

Those countries provide about 90 percent of the nonstandard ammunition purchased by the Pentagon, according to Matthew Herring, the company’s owner, though his firm provides just a fraction of the Pentagon’s total orders.

Mr. Herring, who bought the company in 2011 when it was a three-person firm providing Russian-made helicopters to Afghan forces, is now in Poland meeting with Ukrainian officials to find out what else his company can do to provide them with Eastern Bloc munitions.

“A month ago, when Kyiv was surrounded, it was, ‘What do we need in the next 48 hours?’” Mr. Herring said. “But now the Ukrainians are digging in for a long fight and it’s, ‘How do we get enough to sustain us in this fight?’”

“So it’s a longer view about what they now need,” he added.

The Pentagon’s nonstandard ammunition program was built in direct response to an investigation by The New York Times in 2008 that exposed illegal sales of Chinese-made arms to the U.S. Army in Afghanistan, which became the subject of the 2016 movie “War Dogs.”

According to Mr. Herring, after that scandal, the Pentagon contracted with large defense firms to provide nonstandard ammunition for Afghanistan and later allowed small companies like his to offer bids for the same kinds of services.

Whether certain European nations that still make Soviet-designed munitions will sell their wares to Ukraine is a political decision — one that may depend in part on whether they value maintaining a good relationship with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia.

Representative Jason Crow, Democrat of Colorado, a former Army Ranger who serves on the House Armed Services and Intelligence Committees, said in an interview last week that much of Ukraine’s nonstandard ammunition “very rapidly will be depleted” because of the current pace of combat with Russia.

The Ukrainian military will ultimately need to transition to NATO-standard weapons in the future, he said, so that it can further take advantage of the West’s vast stockpiles of ammunition sitting in bunkers across Europe and the United States.

That move is already underway, in part, through the Pentagon’s provision of five battalions’ worth of 155-mm howitzers to fulfill Ukraine’s pressing needs for what it calls long-range fires, which are similar in capability to the Soviet-designed 152-millimeter guns that Ukraine has been using against Russia.

So while businesses like the Ultra Defense Corp. will still buy as many 152-millimeter artillery shells as it can for Ukraine’s legacy artillery weapons, the Pentagon is aggressively moving in 184,000 shells from its stockpile in Europe for the 155-millimeter howitzers it has pulled from Army and Marine Corps stockpiles in the United States and shipped to Kyiv.

	<p>At a news briefing last week, John F. Kirby, the Pentagon press secretary, said nonstandard ammunition remained an important part of the supply of arms the United States is providing Ukraine.</p> <p>“It’s the lifeblood here for the Ukrainian armed forces,” Mr. Kirby said of the ammunition supplies being given to Kyiv. “We don’t talk a lot about small arms ammunition. It doesn’t get the headlines, I understand that, but at every discussion we have with the Ukrainians, they talk about how important that is.”</p> <p>Since the invasion, he said, the United States has coordinated and delivered more than 50 million rounds of small arms ammunition to Ukraine, much of it Soviet-designed. Mr. Kirby said the United States was continuing to “talk to allies and partners about their inventories of nonstandard ammunition” in an effort to get more munitions to Ukraine.</p> <p>“It is having a truly significant impact on the battlefield,” he said of the Soviet-designed ordnance. “They use that ammunition literally every day in defending their country.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 US top officials in Ukraine; meet Zelensky</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#zelensky-austin-blinken-ukraine">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/04/25/world/ukraine-russia-war-news#zelensky-austin-blinken-ukraine</a>
GIST	<p>IN POLAND, NEAR THE UKRAINIAN BORDER — In a risky and secret visit to Ukraine, the United States’ top diplomat and defense officials <a href="#">arrived in Kyiv on Sunday</a>, with announcements of sweeping diplomatic changes and new military aid for the embattled country.</p> <p>Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III met with <a href="#">President Volodymyr Zelensky</a>, following other world leaders who have visited the capital over two months of war to signal their support for Ukraine.</p> <p>In a move of symbolic and practical significance, the delegation told the Ukrainian president that the United States would move to reopen its embassy in Kyiv, and <a href="#">for the first time since 2019</a>, nominate an American official to lead it.</p> <p>President Biden is set to announce the nomination of Bridget Brink, the current U.S. ambassador to Slovakia, as ambassador to Ukraine in Washington on Monday morning, according to a senior State Department official.</p> <p>The coming changes were announced in a briefing to reporters in Poland by a senior State Department official and a senior defense official who were not authorized to speak publicly about coming policy changes.</p> <p>American diplomats will begin crossing the border into Ukraine this week, the State official said, and will reopen the Kyiv embassy as soon as feasible to begin re-establishing contacts throughout the country in person.</p> <p>Mr. Blinken’s and Mr. Austin’s trip had been planned in extraordinary secrecy, with only a small portion of their staff aware of their intent to visit Mr. Zelensky in Kyiv and even fewer allowed to travel with them. The trip remained under wraps until it was well underway, with both cabinet secretaries flying in nondescript Air Force cargo planes that were about halfway to Poland when the Ukrainian president unexpectedly announced the U.S. visit in a news conference on Saturday.</p> <p>In the latest of a series of increasing military aid announcements, Mr. Biden is expected to commit \$713 million in new military financing for Ukraine and 15 other nations in Eastern Europe, the State Department official said, raising the United States’ total military aid to Kyiv to \$3.7 billion since Feb. 24.</p> <p>The funding is intended to assist the Ukrainians in the fight for the Donbas region by allowing Ukraine’s troops to transition to more advanced weapons and air-defense systems, the officials said. The assistance</p>



will also go toward funding ordnance used by Soviet-designed weapons like rockets, assault rifles and machine guns still used by the Ukrainian army.

The Biden administration has backed Ukraine with aid and weaponry, and has helped lead an international campaign of sanctions against Russia. But it had been under growing pressure to send a high-level official to Kyiv after recent visits there by several European officials, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, who walked the streets with Mr. Zelensky, and the prime ministers of Spain and Denmark.

U.S. officials purposefully did not announce the visit ahead of time, but Mr. Zelensky revealed Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin would come to Kyiv in a news briefing on Saturday, saying he would use the meeting to discuss “the military assistance we need.” The Pentagon and State Department did not immediately comment as it pressed ahead with getting the cabinet secretaries in and out of the country as safely and quietly as possible.

Mr. Blinken was the last high-ranking U.S. official to visit Ukraine when he stopped there in mid-January. The United States closed its embassy in Kyiv on Feb. 14 and its diplomats soon left the country.

Russia’s invasion began 10 days later, and as it tried to seize the capital in an initial offensive, parts of Kyiv were struck by shelling and Ukrainian and Russian forces [fought in the streets](#) of Kyiv’s suburbs. But Russia’s retreat from the area around Kyiv appears to have made the city far less dangerous than it was a few weeks ago, and Western leaders have been taking the opportunity to demonstrate solidarity with Mr. Zelensky.

In March, only a few weeks after Russia’s invasion, [the prime ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovenia traveled to Kyiv](#) on a mission that was kept tightly under wraps. Over the following weeks, they were followed by leaders of [Britain](#), Lithuania, Latvia, [Slovakia](#), Estonia, Spain and Denmark. Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, [visited both Kyiv and Bucha](#), where, in the wake of Russia’s retreat, journalists and investigators have found [evidence of atrocities](#).

In March, Vice President Kamala Harris [traveled to Poland](#), where she expressed American support for Ukraine and U.S. allies in NATO and the European Union. Mr. Blinken [went as far as Poland’s border with Ukraine](#), meeting with Ukrainian diplomats at a crossing used by hundreds of refugees over the course of an hour.

President Biden also visited a town near the border on a state visit to Poland on March 25, but he did not cross into Ukraine. He met with refugees and [gave a speech in Warsaw the next day](#).

Previous visits by senior American officials to other war zones, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, were typically not announced until after the official had arrived in the country — and sometimes not even until after they had left.

Security concerns and contested airspace have still required leaders to make long journeys to reach Kyiv. The British government said that Mr. Johnson, whose visit in early April was unannounced, used several modes of transportation, including a train from eastern Poland.

The White House had ruled out sending Mr. Biden, citing not only the risk but Mr. Biden’s enormous security requirements. Senior cabinet officials such as Mr. Blinken and Mr. Austin travel with smaller entourages.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Russia seizes 42 towns eastern Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/world/europe/russia-ukraine-fighting-east.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/world/europe/russia-ukraine-fighting-east.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article</a>
GIST	Ukrainian officials acknowledged Friday that Russian forces had taken more than three dozen small towns in their initial drive this week to seize eastern Ukraine, offering the first glimpse of what promises to be a



grinding brawl by the Kremlin to achieve broader territorial gains in a new phase of the two-month-old war.

The fighting in the east — along increasingly fortified lines that stretch across more than 300 miles — intensified as a Russian commander signaled even wider ambitions, warning that the Kremlin's forces aimed to take “full control” of southern Ukraine all the way to Moldova, Ukraine's southwest neighbor.

While it seemed unlikely that the commander, Maj. Gen. Rustam Minnekayev, would have misspoken, his warning still drew skepticism, based on Russia's probable difficulty in starting another broad offensive and the general's relatively obscure role in the hierarchy. But his threat could not be ruled out.

The broader war aims that he outlined at a defense industry meeting in a Russian city more than 1,000 miles away from the fighting would be far more ambitious than the downscaled goals set out by President Vladimir V. Putin in recent weeks, which have focused on gaining control of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

Some political and military experts suggested the general's statement could have been part of Russia's continuing efforts to distract or confuse Ukraine and its allies. General Minnekayev's official job involves political propaganda work and does not typically cover military strategy.

On Friday, fierce fighting was underway across a band of southeastern Ukraine, engulfing communities on the banks of the Dnipro River. While Ukrainian officials acknowledged that Russia had taken control of 42 small towns and villages in recent days, they said those same places could be back in Ukrainian hands before long.

Western analysts said Russia's forces, in both the slow but largely successful fight for the southern city of Mariupol and the unsuccessful battle for Kyiv, had been battered and weakened. But rather than resting, reinforcing and re-equipping the forces, Moscow is pressing forward in the east.

The Russian military appears to be trying to secure battlefield gains — including capturing all of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, or oblasts — ahead of May 9, when Moscow holds its annual celebration of its World War II victory.

“They're not taking the pause that would be necessary to re-cohere these forces, to take the week or two to stop, and prepare for a wider offensive,” said Mason Clark, an analyst at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington. “They'll likely be able to take some territory. We do not think they're going to be able to capture the entirety of the oblasts in the next three weeks.”

In his remarks on Friday, General Minnekayev asserted that one of Russia's goals was “full control of the Donbas and southern Ukraine.”

He said that would allow Russia to control Ukraine's Black Sea ports, “through which agricultural and metallurgical products are delivered” to other countries. Still, despite repeated attacks, Russia has failed to seize those ports, including Odesa, a fortified city of 1 million people.

“I want to remind you that many Kremlin plans have been destroyed by our army and people,” Andriy Yermak, chief of staff to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, wrote on social media in response to General Minnekayev's remarks.

General Minnekayev also issued a veiled warning to Moldova, where Moscow-backed separatists seized control of a 250-mile sliver of land known as Transnistria in 1992.

“Control over the south of Ukraine is another connection to Transnistria, where there is also evidence of oppression of the Russian-speaking population,” the general said, echoing false claims of a “genocide” against Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine that Mr. Putin used to help justify the Feb. 24 invasion.

The Moldovan government later summoned the Russian ambassador to complain, saying that General Minnekayev's comments were "not only unacceptable but also unfounded" and led to "increased tension."

Transnistria has never been recognized internationally — not even by Russia. But Russia keeps 1,500 soldiers there, nominally to keep the peace and guard a large Soviet-era munitions cache.

A poor country of 2.6 million, [Moldova is considered vulnerable to further Russian incursions](#). It is not a member of NATO or the European Union, but it hastily applied for E.U. membership last month.

Yuri Fyodorov, a Russian military analyst, said that the broader aims detailed by General Minnekayev "from the military standpoint are unreachable."

"All of Russia's combat-ready units are now concentrated in the Donbas, where Russia failed to achieve any significant advances over the past five days," Mr. Fyodorov said in an interview. General Minnekayev's rank, he said, would generally not allow him to make such sweeping policy statements that also contradict what has been said by the country's top leaders.

Dmitri S. Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesman, declined to comment on General Minnekayev's remarks.

As Western allies race to arm Ukraine with increasingly heavy, long-range weapons, Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain, on a visit to India on Friday, said his country was considering sending tanks to Poland so that Warsaw could then send its own tanks to Ukraine. The Biden administration said this month that it would also help transfer Soviet-made tanks to Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry, in its first statement on casualties from the April 14 sinking of the Moskva, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet, said that one crew member had died, 27 were missing and 396 had been evacuated. Relatives of at least 10 Moskva crew members had voiced frustration over the Kremlin's silence, which was turning into a test of its strong grip on information that Russians receive about the war.

Ukraine said it had sunk the Moskva with two missiles — an assertion corroborated by U.S. officials — while Russia claimed that an onboard fire had caused a munitions explosion that doomed the ship.

As Russia hardened its crackdown on any domestic opposition to the war, it opened a criminal case against Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Russian pro-democracy activist and a contributing columnist for The Washington Post, for spreading "false information," his lawyer said Friday.

Mr. Kara-Murza, 40, arrested earlier this month, faces 10 years in prison, according to the official decree against him posted online by his lawyer, Vadim Prokhorov.

It said he was being investigated for remarks he had made before Arizona lawmakers on March 15. Mr. Kara-Murza told a local news outlet in Phoenix that month that Russia was committing "war crimes" in Ukraine but that "Russia and the Putin regime are not one and the same."

"Americans should be infuriated by Putin's escalating campaign to silence Kara-Murza," Fred Ryan, the publisher of The Post, said in a statement.

Mr. Putin, who has become increasingly vilified in the West over the war, has not completely rejected diplomatic engagement. On Friday, he agreed to meet with the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, in Moscow next week, a stark change from his refusal to even take Mr. Guterres's phone calls. Still, the meeting did not signal a softening of Mr. Putin's views on Ukraine, a former Soviet republic that he has said should not even be a sovereign country.

Ukraine's government said the fighting had made it too dangerous to organize any evacuations from a war that Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, called a "horror story of violations perpetrated against civilians."

	<p>After another attack on the northeastern city of Kharkiv on Friday, residents watched as smoke rose over shops. In the ruined port of Mariupol, hundreds of civilians and the last organized Ukrainian fighters remained trapped in a sprawling steel plant, issuing urgent pleas for help from underground bunkers. Newly released satellite images of the city showed hundreds of hastily dug graves, lending credibility to Ukrainian claims that Russia was trying to cover up atrocities.</p> <p>And in the Zaporizhzhya region of south-central Ukraine, Ukrainian troops were dug in about two miles from Russian forces that were trying to push north in an effort to fortify a land bridge connecting Russian territory with the Crimean Peninsula, which Mr. Putin annexed in 2014.</p> <p>The Ukrainian army's 128th Separate Mountain Assault brigade, armed with anti-tank missiles provided by the Americans and the British as well as other advanced weapons systems, claimed to have destroyed two Russian T-72 tanks that had strayed too close to its positions.</p> <p>"We are on our own land," Captain Vitaliy Nevinsky, the brigade's commander, said. "We are defending ourselves and knocking out this horde, this invasion of our territory."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Egypt demolishing City of Dead cemetery</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/middleeast/cairo-city-of-dead-cemetery.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/middleeast/cairo-city-of-dead-cemetery.html</a>
GIST	<p>CAIRO — Whoever was being buried in Cairo's oldest working cemetery on a recent afternoon had been of some consequence. Glossy S.U.V.s crammed the dusty lanes around an antique mausoleum draped in black and gold; designer sunglasses hid the mourners' tears.</p> <p>The cemetery's chief undertaker, Ashraf Zaher, 48, paused to survey the funeral, another job done. But he didn't stop for long. Just down the lane, his daughter was about to get married. Hundreds of his neighbors, who like him also live in the cemetery, were gathering outside his home, a few mausoleums away.</p> <p>As part of the celebration, men and boys were already updating a traditional sword dance with new break-dance moves. Women were serving celebratory couscous. They had set out on long tables the belongings the bride would take to her new home, a jumble of abundance against the austere centuries-old tombs where she had grown up: pots and plates; a furry red basket; a mattress made up as if for the wedding night, its frilly white coverlet topped with a stuffed panda.</p> <p>Since the Arabs conquered Cairo in the seventh century, Cairenes have been burying their dead beneath the Mokattam cliffs that rise over the city's historic core, interring politicians, poets, heroes and royalty in marble-clad tombs set amid verdant walled gardens.</p> <p>By the mid-20th century, the City of the Dead had also come to house the living: tomb caretakers, morticians, gravediggers and their families, along with tens of thousands of poor Cairenes who found shelter in and among the grand mausoleums.</p> <p>Much of it will soon be gone.</p> <p>The Egyptian government is razing large swaths of the historic cemetery, clearing the way for a flyover bridge that will link central Cairo to the New Administrative Capital, Egypt's grandiose new seat of government, which President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is raising in the desert about 28 miles east of Cairo. The destruction and construction are part of his campaign to modernize Egypt. But its costs are rarely mentioned.</p> <p>"You're seeing Cairo's family tree. The gravestones say who was married to whom, what they did, how they died," said Mostafa el-Sadek, an amateur historian who has documented the cemetery. "You're going to destroy history, you're going to destroy art."</p>

“And for what?” said Seif Zulficar, whose great-aunt, Queen Farida, the first wife of King Farouk of Egypt, was buried here in one of the mausoleums scheduled for destruction. “You’re going to have a bridge?”

Great cities are always cannibalizing their pasts to build their futures, and Cairo is a notorious recycler. The medieval conqueror Saladin tore down ancient buildings to construct his massive citadel, now one of the chief landmarks of the city it overlooks. In the 1800s, one of Egypt’s rulers pried stones off the pyramids to erect new mosques (though, as far as pharaonic plunder goes, European visitors were greedier).

Nor is Cairo the only metropolis to pave over graveyards for public infrastructure, as New York did to establish some of its best-known parks. But, preservationists say, Cairo’s City of the Dead is different: What will disappear is not only a historical monument where Egyptians still visit their ancestors and bury the newly deceased, but also a lively neighborhood.

Parts of the cemetery have already been razed over the last two years, and some mausoleums are already little more than rubble, their carved antique wooden doors carted away and their marble gone.

“It’s against religion to remove the bones of dead people,” said Nabuweya, 50, a tomb dweller who asked that her last name not be published for fear of government reprisal. “You’re not at ease when you’re living. You’re not at ease even when you’re dead.”

The cemetery is unlike a typical Western one. Each family has a walled plot, in which a garden of palms and fruit trees surrounds an airy mausoleum. Marble tombs are carved with gilded Arabic calligraphy. In the bigger plots, outbuildings once hosted living relatives who came on death anniversaries and major holidays to spend the night, honoring the dead with feasts and charity handouts.

The rest of the year, live-in caretakers maintained the mausoleums. That was how Fathy, 67, who also did not want his last name used, his wife, Mona, 56, and their three children came to live next to the tomb of Neshedil Qadin, a consort to the 19th-century ruler Khedive Ismail, considered modern Egypt’s founder. Fathy’s father and grandfather looked after the royal mausoleum, raising their children there before passing down their jobs and homes.

After the 1952 Egyptian revolution deposed the king and sent most of the Egyptian aristocracy fleeing, the government allowed commoners to buy burial plots inside the old family mausoleums and stopped paying to maintain the tombs. The custom of relatives staying overnight faded.

Fathy drew his last government paycheck in 2013. But he had built a decent life: Saving up, the family renovated their quarters, installing electricity and running water. They enjoyed what amounted to a private garden, drying their laundry on lines running over half a dozen graves.

The government plans to move residents to furnished public housing in the desert. But, critics say, few will have the means to cover the roughly \$3,800 down payment or the \$22 monthly rent, especially after their livelihoods — jobs in the cemetery or commercial districts nearby — disappear along with the graves.

The dead, too, will go to the desert. The government has offered new grave plots to families south of Cairo, uniform brick mausoleums much smaller than the originals. They are free, though families must pay for the transfer.

Fathy’s parents were buried near Neshedil’s tomb. But he was concerned about where the princess, as he called her, would go. “My grandfather and my father and me all spent our lives living here with her,” he said.

Egyptian officials have weighed destroying the cemetery and moving its inhabitants to the desert for years, partly to modernize the city and improve living standards, partly, critics charged, because private developers were eyeing the land it sat on.

In the early 1980s, Galila el-Kadi, an architect who has studied the cemetery for decades, found about 179,000 residents, the last known count. She said many more moved in after Egypt's 2011 revolution, when a power vacuum loosened security enforcement.

"They have never dealt with the relationship between the city of the living and the city of the dead," Ms. el-Kadi said of the officials. "It was an embarrassment for the government. And in Egypt, when there's a problem that seems unsolvable, or very hard to solve, the solution is to just delete it."

The mausoleums registered as landmarks will be preserved, according to Khaled el-Husseiny, a spokesman for Administrative Capital for Urban Development, the government-run company developing the new capital. Other tombs to be spared include that of a relative of Mr. el-Sisi, according to preservationists, who said that the government's plans for the cemetery had changed to avoid razing his relative's grave.

But only a small portion of the total have the landmark designation, which will leave them isolated islands between new construction, preservationists said.

Mr. Zaher, the chief undertaker, is moving to the new cemetery along with the displaced dead. He is not wasting time on nostalgia. There are many cemetery residents happy to be leaving shabby make-do homes for new apartments, he said.

"Instead of living in a graveyard," said Mr. Zaher, shrugging, "they'll get to live in an apartment."

He said the new flyover would also ease traffic, though it was unclear whether this should matter to people who are largely carless and rarely travel beyond the neighborhood.

Many officials do not appear to realize what the new bridge will replace.

While leading a tour of the new capital, Ahmad el-Helaly, a development company official, was troubled to learn that Queen Farida had been disinterred, her remains moved to a nearby mosque by special government permission. Mr. el-Helaly had named his baby daughter after the queen.

It was sad, he said. But after a moment, he shook it off.

"What can I say?" he said. "Cairo is too overcrowded. We have to do something to regain the glory of ancient Cairo, to restore the beauty of ancient Cairo."

So much for the old. Then it was back to the tour, and the new.

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HEADLINE	04/24 America's road to Ukraine war
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/us/politics/russia-ukraine-diplomacy.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/us/politics/russia-ukraine-diplomacy.html</a>
GIST	<p>Smoke hung over the gray streets that day in Kyiv, where protesters had piled tires, furniture and barbed wire to barricade themselves from security forces. Torn blue and yellow Ukrainian flags whipped in the wind, and candles left on sidewalks marked where people had been gunned down. A drawing of a reviled president depicted as a pig was tacked to a lamp post.</p> <p>And yet there was a feeling of hope in Kyiv in March 2014, as Secretary of State John F. Kerry met with survivors of a violent crackdown on demonstrations. He commended the Ukrainians for their bravery in confronting a Kremlin-backed leader and promised that the United States would support the new government.</p>

But Russian forces had moved into Crimea, Ukraine's peninsula on the Black Sea, and Mr. Kerry warned: "It is clear that Russia has been working hard to create a pretext for being able to invade further."

Eight years later, with Russian troops obliterating Ukrainian cities and towns, [Mr. Kerry's words](#) seem eerily prescient.

Through the administrations of three American presidents, the United States has sent mixed signals about its commitment to Ukraine. All the while, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia watched Washington's moves, biding his time.

"We've been all over the place on Ukraine," said Fiona Hill, a Russia and Eurasia expert who advised the three administrations before President Biden. "Our own frames have shifted over time, and our own policies have shifted."

"I think we need to re-articulate why Ukraine matters," she said.

Now, two months into Mr. Putin's war, the United States is at the center of an extraordinary campaign to foil him, casting the military conflict as a broader battle between democratic values and authoritarian might.

"It's nothing less than a direct challenge to the rule-based international order established since the end of World War II," [Mr. Biden said in Warsaw last month](#). "And it threatens to return to decades of war that ravaged Europe before the international rule-based order was put in place. We cannot go back to that."

The United States has rushed weapons and humanitarian aid to Ukraine and imposed sanctions intended to cut off Russia from global markets. This past weekend, Mr. Biden sent Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III to Ukraine as affirmation of Washington's support.

In many ways, officials said, Mr. Biden is trying to make up for the years of U.S. indecisiveness toward Kyiv. Those who wavered earlier include top Biden aides who had worked in the Obama administration as well as officials in the administration of Donald J. Trump, who [undermined U.S. policy](#) on Ukraine for personal political gain, according to current and former officials and a review of records.

### **The Roots of War**

Since the earliest days of Ukraine's independence, in 1991, American officials have recognized the country's strategic value as Russia struggled to find its footing after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

"Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire," Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had been the national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter, [wrote in a March 1994 essay](#). "But with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire."

Two months earlier, under pressure from the United States, Ukraine had reached an agreement to destroy its [nuclear arsenal](#). President Bill Clinton heralded the pact as "a hopeful and historic breakthrough" to improve global security. But Ukraine's leader, President Leonid Kuchma, [warned that it would make his fledgling country more vulnerable](#).

"If tomorrow, Russia goes into Crimea, no one will raise an eyebrow," he said that year.

At the time, [Moscow was already goading a separatist movement in Crimea, even as Mr. Clinton predicted](#) that Ukraine would become a major European power.

Yet over the next decade, experts said, NATO left out [Ukraine](#) to avoid angering Russia, which some members saw as an important economic partner and energy supplier and hoped would evolve into a more democratic and less threatening power.

The Baltic States joined NATO in 2004, and four years later, President George W. Bush [publicly backed Ukraine's ambition to follow](#). But Western European nations were reluctant. Today, Ukraine is [neither a NATO member](#) nor a part of the European Union, and officials cautioned as recently as this month that its inclusion in either was far from likely.

Years after Mr. Bush's show of support, a new Ukrainian president, [Viktor F. Yanukovich](#), tried to move the country closer to Russia, sparking mass protests in November 2013 when he refused to sign a long-planned agreement to strengthen ties with the European Union.

That led to the crackdown in Kyiv's streets in 2014.

Security forces [opened fire on protesters](#) in central Kyiv in February that year, killing dozens. Protesters held their ground, attracting public support in Europe and the United States. Mr. Yanukovich fled to Russia.

"In the hearts of Ukrainians and the eyes of the world, there is nothing strong about what Russia is doing," Mr. Kerry said during his visit to [Kyiv](#).

Within days, Mr. Putin ordered the invasion of Crimea, and he soon [formally recognized](#) it as a "sovereign and independent state."

A slow-burn war in eastern Ukraine followed, with Kyiv battling a separatist movement supported by Russian weapons and troops. An estimated 13,000 people were killed over the next eight years.

Mr. Putin's swift actions caught President Barack Obama off guard.

Mr. Obama vowed the United States would never recognize Russia's annexation of Crimea and imposed economic sanctions, but his aides said in [later accounts](#) that he was skeptical of Ukraine's corruption-ridden government.

And Mr. Obama [said](#) in a 2016 interview that a showdown with Mr. Putin over Ukraine would have been futile.

His administration gave [more than \\$1.3 billion in assistance](#) to Ukraine between 2014 and 2016, but Mr. Obama said no when his national security team, including Mr. Biden and Mr. Kerry, [recommended](#) sending weapons to Kyiv.

Among Mr. Obama's defenders was Mr. Blinken, then the deputy secretary of state and now America's top diplomat.

By sending military aid to Ukraine, "you're playing to Russia's strength, because Russia is right next door," Mr. Blinken, then the deputy secretary of state, [said in early 2015](#).

Any aid, he added, "is likely to be matched and then doubled and tripled and quadrupled by Russia."

Neither the Obama administration nor its key European allies believed Ukraine [was ready to join](#) NATO. But tensions in the alliance were growing as Europeans sought to maintain trade ties and energy deals with Russia.

The division was [captured in a phone call](#) in which a senior State Department official profanely criticized European leaders' approach to helping Ukraine. A leaked recording of the call was posted on YouTube in February 2014 in what was widely believed to be an attempt by Russia to stir up discord between the United States and Europe.

Yet as much as anything else, Ukraine was a costly distraction to Mr. Obama's broader agenda.



“It was hard to reconcile the time and energy required to lead the diplomacy on Ukraine with the demands on the United States elsewhere around the world, especially after ISIS took over much of Iraq and Syria in the summer of 2014,” Derek H. Chollet, a senior Pentagon official at the time, wrote in a book about Mr. Obama’s foreign policy.

Mr. Chollet is now a senior counselor to Mr. Blinken at the State Department.

### **‘Do Us a Favor’**

Volodymyr Zelensky, [a former comedian](#), won a landslide victory in Ukraine’s presidential elections in April 2019 after campaigning on an anti-corruption pledge.

Once in office, he turned to ending the war in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine through negotiations with Mr. Putin.

The new Ukrainian president “knew he needed the backing of the United States and the American president,” said William B. Taylor Jr., who started his second tour as ambassador to Ukraine that June after his predecessor, [Marie L. Yovanovitch](#), was pushed out on Mr. Trump’s orders.

Mr. Zelensky tried to arrange a meeting with Mr. Trump at the White House. But Mr. Trump had negative views of Ukraine even before he took office, influenced partly by his former campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, who had [made more than \\$60 million](#) consulting for a Ukrainian political party backed by Russia.

Mr. Trump’s opinions were reinforced in [meetings with Mr. Putin](#), whom he publicly [admired](#), and [Viktor Orban](#), the autocratic prime minister of Hungary.

And close associates of Mr. Trump, in particular Rudolph W. Giuliani, then his personal lawyer, were [urging the president](#) to get Mr. Zelensky to open two investigations: one into Mr. Biden, Mr. Trump’s main political opponent, for actions in Ukraine related to his son Hunter Biden’s business dealings; the other based in part on a debunked conspiracy theory that Ukraine, not Russia, had interfered in the 2016 election, to help Hillary Clinton. Mr. Trump embraced the theory because it undermined the finding of the U.S. intelligence community that Russia had interfered to help him.

But U.S. policy had been on a notably different track. Earlier, in December 2017, under pressure from his national security aides and Congress, Mr. Trump agreed to do what Mr. Obama would not: approve the sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine.

But in mid-2019, the White House [froze \\$391 million in military aid](#) to Ukraine, including the Javelins, to build leverage for Mr. Trump’s demands, congressional investigators later found. The move hobbled Ukraine’s war effort against Russia-backed separatists.

“For it to be held up, they couldn’t understand that,” Mr. Taylor said.

That set the stage for a fateful [July 25 call](#) between Mr. Trump and Mr. Zelensky. “I would like you to do us a favor,” Mr. Trump said. He requested the two investigations.

Mr. Zelensky and his aides were confused. “The rest of the U.S. government was very supportive of Ukraine,” Mr. Taylor said. “But from the top, the president had a different message and set of conditions.”

Mr. Zelensky scheduled [a CNN interview](#) for September [to announce](#) one or both of the investigations that Mr. Trump had requested to satisfy the American president. But the interview never happened because journalists [had begun reporting](#) on the hold on military aid, and lawmakers sympathetic to Ukraine had persisted in asking the White House about the suspended aid. On Sept. 9, three House committees [announced](#) investigations into the pressure campaign after reviewing a whistle-blower complaint citing the July call.

The Trump administration released the aid on Sept. 11.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met with Mr. Zelensky in Kyiv on Jan. 31, 2020, the first cabinet official to do so since the [announcement](#) of an impeachment inquiry into Mr. Trump the previous September. The Senate trial was underway.

Just days earlier, Mr. Pompeo [had blown up](#) at an NPR reporter in an interview, asking her to identify Ukraine on an unmarked map and yelling, “Do you think Americans care” about Ukraine? — using an expletive before “Ukraine.”

Yet in Kyiv, Mr. Pompeo [stood next to Mr. Zelensky](#) in the presidential palace and said the U.S. commitment to support Ukraine “will not waver.”

But the damage had been done, and Mr. Zelensky was unconvinced that the United States was a trusted ally, Ms. Yovanovitch said in an interview last month.

“Trying to use our national security policy in order to further President Trump’s personal and political agenda was not just wrong, but it was really detrimental to the bilateral relationship,” she said. “It colored how Zelensky handled foreign policy.”

With all the disruption, former U.S. officials said, Mr. Putin no doubt saw weakness in Washington.

### **Biden vs. Putin**

Consumed by the pandemic and the economy, Mr. Biden did not prioritize Ukraine at first. But Mr. Blinken visited Kyiv in May 2021 with a message of support.

During a steady rain, Mr. Blinken joined Dmytro Kuleba, the Ukrainian foreign minister, on a walk to the Wall of National Remembrance, where photos of soldiers who had been killed in combat with Russia in the Donbas were displayed outside St. Michael’s monastery.

But he also [went to Kyiv with some tough love](#), determined to press Ukraine to make political and economic changes — a core issue for Mr. Biden when he oversaw relations with the country as vice president.

Just before the visit, Mr. Zelensky’s government [had replaced](#) the chief executive of the largest state-owned energy company, whom Western officials had praised for his transparency. The State Department had chastised the move as “just the latest example” of Ukrainian leaders [violating](#) practices of good governance. In Kyiv, Mr. Blinken told reporters that he was urging Ukraine to strengthen itself by “building institutions, advancing reforms, combating corruption.”

Such concerns paled in the face of Russia’s growing military threat, which Washington was watching “very, very closely,” Mr. Blinken said. Mr. Putin had begun amassing troops along Ukraine’s borders. By fall, the number approached 100,000.

This past January, Mr. Blinken rushed back to Kyiv for more consultations before a [hastily arranged meeting in Geneva](#) with the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, in a last-ditch attempt to avert war.

But Russia would not be deterred, and [high-level contacts](#) between Washington and Moscow have been severely limited ever since.

By contrast, Mr. Blinken speaks frequently to Mr. Kuleba to convey American support that, at least in terms of aid, has been greater than at any time in the three decades since Ukraine declared independence.

“The world is with you,” Mr. Blinken told him on March 5, [stepping into Ukraine](#) just a few feet beyond Poland’s border.

	<p>“We’re in it with Ukraine — one way or another, short run, the medium run, the long run,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. Kuleba referred to an “unprecedented, swift reaction” to Russia’s invasion and thanked Mr. Blinken for the support.</p> <p>“But,” he said, “it has to be continued.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/24 Audit: CBP undercounts border deaths</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/24/homeland-security-undercounts-migrant-deaths-borde/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/24/homeland-security-undercounts-migrant-deaths-borde/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The Border Patrol has been undercounting migrant deaths along the U.S.-Mexico boundary for years, according to a report by Congress’ chief watchdog agency.</p> <p>The revelation is something immigrant rights activists have long asserted. The Government Accountability Office confirmed it, finding that in eastern Arizona, a particularly deadly part of the border, the government’s count was off by more than 50% from independent tallies.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection, which oversees the Border Patrol, keeps a tally of migrants its personnel find, but it struggles to account for cases where some other entity finds the remains, investigators said.</p> <p>That means the government may not have a complete picture of the growing chaos at the border, where fatalities appear to be on the rise.</p> <p>“CBP has not collected and recorded, or reported to Congress, complete data on migrant deaths or disclosed limitations with the data it has reported,” the GAO said.</p> <p>Homeland Security Department officials said they are trying to make improvements. Activists on the ground said they will believe it when they see it.</p> <p>“I applaud their efforts, at least in terms of the rhetoric, but it remains to be seen whether they’ll actually follow through on this,” said Brad Jones, a volunteer with Humane Borders. “In years past, they’ve been brought to bear on undercounting migrant deaths and indicated they’d do something on this, but they just never seem to act on it.”</p> <p>He called GAO’s report “a pretty serious rebuke” to the Border Patrol.</p> <p>CBP has declined to release its current death tally for 2022, but it ended 2021 with 557 recorded fatalities along the southern border, breaking its previous record of 293 deaths in 2005.</p> <p>Those numbers undersell the actual extent of death, GAO found.</p> <p>In one region in eastern Arizona from 2015 to 2019, CBP tallied 339 deaths. But Humane Borders, which works with the medical examiner in Pima County, which ends up with custody of many of the bodies, counts 699 deaths for the same period.</p> <p>Mr. Jones, a political scientist at the University of California, Davis, said even that tally is an undercount.</p> <p>“We know 4,000 remains have been recovered at the U.S.-Mexican border over the last 20 years. What we don’t know, and what’s difficult to know, is what the actual true number is. I’ve seen estimates of three to eight times that number,” he said.</p> <p>Jim H. Crumacker, Homeland Security’s liaison to GAO, said CBP has made strides in improving its data collection and its deployment of migrant-saving methods.</p>

He promised that the next report to Congress on missing migrants will shed light on trends in migrant rescues and deaths.

He did agree with all three of GAO's recommendations, including one to make better use of external data such as death reports tallied by local medical examiners.

CBP officials told GAO investigators that they are aware of the higher counts from other sources and use them for "situational awareness," even if they aren't part of the agency's official count.

The problem, GAO said, is that Congress has instructed CBP to use all the numbers at its disposal. Not only does the agency not do that, but it also hasn't told Congress the limitations on its data, GAO said.

Amid the border chaos, the rising number of migrant deaths hasn't grabbed much attention.

But both sides of the immigration debate say it's a telling detail that says a lot about the current surge.

Border Patrol agents say the deaths are obvious results of the overall flow of people. More coming means more dying.

Immigrant rights activists, meanwhile, argue that the government's immigration policies are responsible. They say stiffening borders over the past few decades has pushed migrants to more rugged and remote regions looking for viable crossings — and dying in the attempts.

In an attempt to save lives, CBP has placed 165 rescue beacons in highly trafficked corridors across the southern border. Migrants who reach a beacon can activate it and summon help.

More than 2,500 placards have been placed with instructions on getting help by dialing 911.

That can help with deaths from exhaustion and exposure, but it does little to solve the growing number of drownings.

It also can't help with the rising number of deaths of migrants in vehicle collisions, spawned by smuggling drivers taking ever more chances, or the surging number of migrants dying after falling off the border wall.

It's not just migrants who are paying a price.

On Friday, a member of the Texas National Guard went missing in the Rio Grande after helping rescue two migrants who appeared to be drowning. The soldier was deployed to the border as part of Gov. Greg Abbott's attempt to patch gaps in the Biden administration's border security.

As of Sunday, the search was continuing.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Day 61 of the Russia invasion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-61-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-61-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• US secretary of state Antony Blinken and defence secretary Lloyd Austin <a href="#">have held talks</a> with Volodymyr Zelenskiy, an adviser has told local Ukrainian news outlets. Zelenskiy is expected to use the meeting to appeal for more US military aid.</li><li>• Russia is <a href="#">planning a "staged referendum</a> in the southern city of Kherson aimed at justifying its occupation", the UK's Ministry of Defence has said in its latest intelligence report. "The city is key to Russia's objective of establishing a land bridge to Crimea and dominating southern Ukraine," the ministry said.</li><li>• Igor Zhovkva, a top diplomatic adviser to Zelenskiy, <a href="#">has criticised UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres' upcoming meeting with Vladimir Putin</a> and Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, saying that Guterres does "not really" have the authority to speak on behalf of Ukraine.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zelenskiy <a href="#">has tweeted his congratulations</a> to Emmanuel Macron for winning the French presidential election and called Macron “a true friend of Ukraine”.</li> <li>• <b>Dozens of civilians who died during the Russian occupation of the Ukrainian city of Bucha <a href="#">were killed by tiny metal arrows</a></b> from shells of a type fired by Russian artillery, forensic doctors have said. Fléchettes are an anti-personnel weapon widely used during the first world war.</li> <li>• <b>Latest UNHCR data reveals <a href="#">almost 5.2 million Ukrainians have fled the country</a></b>. More than 1,151,000 Ukrainians have left during April so far, compared with 3.4 million in the month of March. Beyond that, the UN’s International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates more than 7.7 million people have been displaced within Ukraine.</li> <li>• <b>The OSCE, the world’s largest security body, has said it is “extremely concerned” after several of its Ukrainian members <a href="#">were believed to have been arrested in Russian-controlled territories</a></b> in the country’s east.</li> <li>• In his Easter Sunday message, <b>Zelenskiy said the religious festival “gives us great hope and unwavering faith that light will overcome darkness, good will overcome evil, life will overcome death, and therefore Ukraine will surely win”.</b></li> <li>• <b>Pope Francis has used the Orthodox Easter weekend to <a href="#">once again appeal for a truce in Ukraine</a></b> “to ease the suffering of exhausted people”.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine says hundreds of its forces and civilians are trapped inside the Azovstal steel plant in the city of Mariupol</b>, which Russia has been trying to take for two months. Although Moscow had earlier declared victory in Mariupol and said its forces did not need to take the factory, the Ukrainian authorities say Russian forces have resumed air strikes and are trying to storm the plant.</li> <li>• <b>Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Zelenskiy <a href="#">discussed Mariupol</a> during a telephone call.</b> Turkey is ready to give all possible assistance during negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, the Turkish presidency said on Sunday.</li> <li>• <b>The UN has called for an “immediate stop” to fighting in Mariupol so that civilians trapped in the city can be evacuated.</b></li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Bucha civilians killed by metal darts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/dozens-bucha-civilians-killed-flechettes-metal-darts-russian-artillery">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/dozens-bucha-civilians-killed-flechettes-metal-darts-russian-artillery</a>
GIST	<p>Dozens of civilians who died during the Russian occupation of the Ukrainian city of Bucha were killed by tiny metal arrows from shells of a type fired by Russian artillery, forensic doctors have said.</p> <p>Pathologists and coroners who are carrying out postmortems on bodies found in mass graves in the region north of Kyiv, where occupying Russian forces have been accused of <a href="#">atrocities</a>, said they had found small metal darts, called fléchettes, embedded in people’s heads and chests.</p> <p>“We found several really thin, nail-like objects in the bodies of men and women and so did others of my colleagues in the region,” Vladyslav Pirovskyi, a Ukrainian forensic doctor, told the Guardian. “It is very hard to find those in the body, they are too thin. The majority of these bodies come from the Bucha-Irpin region.”</p> <p>Independent weapons experts who reviewed pictures of the metal arrows found in the bodies, seen by the Guardian, confirmed that they were fléchettes, an anti-personnel weapon widely used during the first world war.</p> <p>These small metal darts are contained in tank or field gun shells. Each shell can contain up to 8,000 fléchettes. Once fired, shells burst when a timed fuse detonates and explodes above the ground.</p> <p>Fléchettes, typically between 3cm and 4cm in length, release from the shell and disperse in a conical arch about 300m wide and 100m long. On impact with a victim’s body, the dart can lose rigidity, bending into a hook, while the arrow’s rear, made of four fins, often breaks away causing a second wound.</p>

[According to a number of witnesses in Bucha](#), fléchette rounds were fired by Russian artillery a few days before forces withdrew from the area at the end of March.

Svitlana Chmut, a resident of Bucha, told the Washington Post she had found several nailed on her car.

Although human rights groups have long sought a ban on fléchette shells, the munitions are not prohibited under international law. However, the use of imprecise lethal weapons in densely populated civilian areas is a violation of humanitarian law.

According to Neil Gibson, a weapons expert at the UK-based Fenix Insight group, who has reviewed the photos of the fléchettes found in Bucha, the metal darts came from a 122mm 3Sh1 artillery round, in use by Russian artillery.

“Another uncommon and rarely seen projectile,” [said Gibson on Twitter](#). “This time it’s the Russian equivalent of the US ‘Beehive’ series of Anti-personnel (APERS) projectiles ... It operates like a true shrapnel projectile, but is filled with fléchettes and a wax binder.”

Fléchettes have been used as ballistic weapons since the first world war. Dropped by the then-novel airplanes to attack infantry, the lethal metal darts were able to pierce helmets. They were not widely used during the second world war, but re-emerged in the Vietnam war, when the US employed a version of fléchette loads, packed into plastic cups.

“Fléchettes are an anti-personnel weapon designed to penetrate dense vegetation and to strike a large number of enemy soldiers,” [according to Amnesty International](#). “They should never be used in built-up civilian areas.”

“You don’t have to be an arms expert to understand that Russia ignored the rules of war in Bucha,” Bucha’s mayor, Anatoliy Fedoruk, said. “Bucha was turned into a Chechen safari, where they used landmines against civilians.”

Russian forces captured Bucha, 18.5 miles (30km) north-west of Kyiv, after ferocious fighting a few days after the invasion began in February. They were given an order to retreat at the end of March and in the subsequent days, mass graves containing the bodies of hundreds of people who had apparently been massacred came to light.

A team of 18 experts from the forensic department of France’s national gendarmerie, alongside a team of forensic investigators from Kyiv, have started documenting the [terror inflicted on civilians](#) during the month-long occupation.

“We are seeing a lot mutilated (disfigured) bodies,” said Pirovsky. “A lot of them had their hands tied behind their backs and shots in the back of their heads. There were also cases with automatic gunfire, like six to eight holes on the back of victims. And we have several cases of cluster bombs’ elements embedded in the bodies of the victims.”

[Evidence collected by the Guardian](#) during a visit to Bucha, Hostomel and Borodianka, and reviewed by independent weapons experts, showed that Russian troops used cluster munitions – which are banned in much of the world – and powerful unguided bombs in populated areas, which have destroyed at least eight civilian buildings.

Fléchettes are rarely used in modern warfare, other than periodically by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), which deployed them in military operations in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip, killing and wounding civilians.

In March 2008, a Palestinian journalist and videographer with Reuters, Fadel Shana, was [killed by fléchettes](#) from a shell fired by an Israeli tank. X-rays later showed metal darts embedded in Shana’s chest, legs and flak jacket, which was not armoured.



HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Fortress Zaporizhzhia prepares to fight</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/fortress-zaporizhzhia-prepares-to-fight-as-war-closes-in">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/25/fortress-zaporizhzhia-prepares-to-fight-as-war-closes-in</a>
GIST	<p>Outside Zaporizhzhia there are several lines of deep trenches, ringed by sandbags, armed men, and more sandbags and armed men.</p> <p>But life in the city is surprisingly normal – even busy – for wartime Ukraine. As the only large city in south-east Ukraine under Ukrainian control, Zaporizhzhia has become a destination for the hundreds of thousands of people who fled Russian occupation.</p> <p>With 70% of the wider Zaporizhzhia region under Russian military control, there are fears, however, that Moscow’s forces will attempt to take it.</p> <p>Ukrainian reinforcements are moving towards the city and active fighting has begun in earnest. Ukrainian soldiers told the Guardian they had recently retreated from one town in the Zaporizhzhia region. Villages and towns about an hour’s drive from the city that were visited by journalists three weeks ago are no longer safe, according to the regional military administration.</p> <p>“You can see for yourself people are out, going to work – the city is prepared but it won’t come to that,” said Ivan Ariefiev, the press secretary of the Zaporizhzhia regional military administration, at one of a series of war-related training courses being offered to the city’s teachers and journalists. Attendees, who are then expected to train the wider community, were taught how to load a gun, administer first aid and do a basic medical evaluation.</p> <p>Despite the proximity of Russian troops, Ariefiev said, the regional military command was confident it could keep Russian forces at bay. “No one is being evacuated from the city itself,” said Ariefiev. “It’s only the evacuees from the south who are leaving for other places.”</p> <p>In the newly dug maze of trenches outside Zaporizhzhia, the Guardian heard frequent incoming shells that soldiers said were landing 3km to 5km away. The group of soldiers who dug the trenches said they hoped these lines of defence would never be used and that Ukrainian soldiers farther south would withstand the attacks.</p> <p>The soldiers who were not on the frontlines said they had a fraction of the medical and protective equipment they needed. For the whole platoon, they had just six tourniquets – a first aid essential that prevents blood loss. When asked if they thought the Russians would advance soon, they would only say they expected to fight.</p> <p>“We just need arms from our western comrades and we’ll do it. The [Russians] have too much old Soviet equipment,” the platoon commander said. “In case you hadn’t noticed, they reached Kharkiv, Kyiv, encircled Sumy and Chernihiv – four huge regions – and we kicked them out. They were considered a powerful army, but we pissed on them.”</p> <p>The previous day there had been a double rocket strike by Russian forces. The city has been hit infrequently compared with other eastern Ukrainian cities such as Kharkiv or towns in the Donbas. Some of the eight people wounded by the rocket attack were rushed to Zaporizhzhia military hospital, which occasionally takes civilians as well as soldiers.</p> <p>According to the military press secretary for the hospital, Nikita, a former IT manager who joined up days after the invasion, none of the rocket strikes hit their targets, instead been caught by anti-aircraft systems, lessening the impact. “If they had hit as intended, we would have seen many, many more wounded,” Nikita said.</p> <p>The head surgeon at the hospital said they were coping with the wounded but were working 24/7. He said he had been home only twice since the war started, and had been called back in almost immediately.</p>



Despite the relative safety the city's defences offer, some of those who have arrived from Russian-occupied areas want to return home.

The Guardian met one woman among a crowd of people in a car park on the outskirts of the city normally used to receive convoys from Russian-occupied territory. Iryna was part of a group of about 400 people who wanted to return to Berdyansk, a city in southern Zaporizhzhia taken by Russian forces at the beginning of March.

"We're Ukrainians, we want to be part of Ukraine, but you have to understand my mother is bedridden and almost out of insulin," Iryna said. "I came here last week to buy Pampers and medicine [for her] because in Berdyansk there's nothing."

But the Ukrainian authorities said they could not let the group leave Zaporizhzhia because of heavy fighting on the roads.

Iryna rang her husband, Vitaly, who had stayed in Berdyansk. He said over the phone that Iryna's mother had a matter of days left to live.

For six days in a row the Berdyansk residents – who have clubbed together in the hope that it will make their passage safer – have come to the car park from the temporary accommodation offered to evacuees and waited for permission to leave.

The drivers of the coaches and minibuses are themselves from Berdyansk, and have helped to evacuate people from there and from neighbouring cities including Mariupol. They too are eager to leave as they plan to pick more up evacuees at the other end.

"I don't care if it's dangerous, just let us go," Iryna said to a representative of the Ukrainian military, who was surrounded by other women, a few of whom also said they were going back to look after bedridden relatives. The military representative told the women that she could not risk letting them travel because of shelling on the roads.

A family with small children from near Volnovakha, a city in the Donetsk region also under Russian occupation, said they were hitching a lift with the Berdyansk convoy and planned to find other transport from there to take them home, another 150km away.

"We've run out of money. Of course we don't want to live under occupation, but we can't sleep in a shelter any more," said Vlad, holding his three-year-old son in his arms. He said they had been in Zaporizhzhia for a week. "It would cost us 300 hryvnia (£8) a night to rent a flat. That's not realistic."

He added: "The volunteers have been just super but there's no work here. At least there we have a small allotment and we'll be with our parents."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Redmond hotel as housing for refugees</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-to-use-redmond-hotel-as-temporary-housing-for-refugees">https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-to-use-redmond-hotel-as-temporary-housing-for-refugees</a>
GIST	<p>King County will soon be opening up more temporary housing for refugees. Executive Dow Constantine has announced plans to use the former Silver Cloud Inn in Redmond until it's ready to operate as a Health through Housing site in which it can offer services for the homeless.</p> <p>"There's a workforce shortage amongst people who provide supportive housing so we have had to extend timelines as we really try to work with providers so we can get facilities properly staffed before we open them up," King County Department of Community and Human Services Director Leo Flor stated.</p>

	<p>The county says it will offer shelter and services from May through September for as many as 250 Ukrainian and Afghan refugees, including about 75 people who will move from the King County-owned Extended Stay in Federal Way.</p> <p>“Just puts the building to good use while we are working toward using it as permanent supportive housing,” King County Council Chair Claudia Balducci added.</p> <p>That will let construction crews get started on work on the Federal Way building, which the county also purchased as permanent supportive housing for the homeless.</p> <p>“We do need to go in and make a little bit of renovation to make sure there's enough space for the on-site services that are really a critical part of our program,” Flor said.</p> <p>Flor insists this effort to house refugees in Redmond does not delay plans to house the homeless here.</p> <p>“We were going to spend the next and we still will spend the next four or five months procuring an operator, somebody to come in and actually provide the services on-site, finalizing an agreement with the city of Redmond, think about the good neighbor agreement that’s going to go on with the city and neighboring locations,” Flor said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 New crisis hotline 988—WA ready?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/a-new-crisis-hotline-988-is-coming-this-summer-is-washington-ready/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/mental-health/a-new-crisis-hotline-988-is-coming-this-summer-is-washington-ready/</a>
GIST	<p>A green light blinks quietly on an office phone monitor. A volunteer named Mark McAllister quickly transfers the call to his direct line. A soft voice comes through his headset: “I’ve been feeling a little bit sad lately.”</p> <p>McAllister shifts in his chair, his glasses bobbing as he nods along. To his right, two other volunteers take calls. One listens to a teary 17-year-old who recently fought with her mother. Another call is from a woman worried about her brother who’s experiencing symptoms of severe mental illness; he’s refusing treatment and she doesn’t know what to do.</p> <p>Every day at this inconspicuous office a couple of blocks from the Space Needle, dozens of volunteers and staff answer crisis calls and monitor the suicide hotline for King County and large parts of Washington state.</p> <p>In less than 100 days, this place will add dozens of new staffers for the rollout of 988, a nationwide crisis phone line that’s set to debut in mid-July. The goal is to consolidate various hotlines and phone services for youth, veterans, people seeking substance use treatment and any caller who just needs a kind listener or resources for their mental health.</p> <p>The challenge is this: consolidating a patchwork of crisis response systems across police, fire and mobile crisis teams, and across state agencies, county and tribal lines. Those building the hotline hope it will eventually connect to a robust behavioral health system that can provide next-day crisis appointments and support families with resources and treatment options. That system doesn’t fully exist today — and won’t for years, if ever — but those implementing 988 see the hotline as the first milestone.</p> <p>Others, though, worry about launching 988 without a full infrastructure behind it. Ben Miller, president of the mental health advocacy nonprofit Well-Being Trust, warns that much of the U.S. is not ready: Workforce shortages in the mental health sector are dire, and in Washington the number of beds for crisis stabilization is limited.</p> <p>“Hope is not a strategy,” said Miller, who is also a clinical psychologist based in Tennessee. “We’re going to have people call a new number and we’re going to get the same response [as they did before the</p>

hotline]. Or even worse, my biggest fear is that they call the new number [and] they get a police response.”

Encounters between police and people with mental illnesses can have tragic results: People with mental illnesses are [16 times more likely](#) to be killed in a police shooting than the general population, according to the Treatment Advocacy Center.

The stakes for 988 are high, Miller cautioned: “We run the risk of losing the trust of the public by not being prepared.”

### **How does 988 work?**

In 2020, Congress passed the [National Suicide Hotline Designation Act](#) as a complement to the current 911 emergency line, requiring states to launch the new 988 number by July 16. The following year, the Washington state legislature passed House Bill 1477 to further develop the plan and partially fund the service through a tax on phone and internet lines (24 cents per month, then 40 cents starting next year).

Three nonprofits that already operate local crisis hotlines — Frontier Behavioral Health, Crisis Connections and Volunteers of America — are set to host the 988 line across Washington, with the majority of Washington’s calls monitored by Volunteers of America. Crisis Connections serves King County, the most populous and busiest part of the state for crisis calls. They receive about 282 calls a day on the current King County hotline, and hundreds more through programs like Teen Link, a call and text service for youth; a service for veterans; and another called the WA Warmline, hosted by peers who have direct experience with emotional or mental health challenges.

While Crisis Connections has a volunteer program for its other hotlines, the 988 line will rely on 35 paid staff counselors who can provide crisis intervention and crisis counseling services around the clock, as well as referrals to local resources and a mobile crisis team when needed. Volunteers of America says it’s bringing on 50 additional staff members.

Administrators expect about 128,000 statewide calls in the first year of the new line, but it’s hard to know how fast demand for services will grow. So far, the state has allocated over \$27 million.

“We don’t want to overpromise to the community,” cautioned Michelle McDaniels, CEO of Crisis Connections and a member of the Crisis Response Improvement Strategy Committee, a group of state leaders tasked with planning the rollout.

“This is not going to be a massive reform on July 16, that we absolutely have a system that’s in place.”

At first, both local county hotlines and the 988 line will be active — something that some staff worry could be confusing for the public.

Some staff also worry about the complications of transferring calls coming from three different dispatch centers: former county hotlines, the new 988 state line, and traditional 911 police and fire lines.

“We don’t want (a caller) to have to tell their story over and over again,” said Joe Avalos, the chief operating officer of Thurston-Mason Behavioral Health Administrative Service Organization.

At best, the caller is frustrated and at worst, Avalos explains, the dispatch loses the caller — which means losing the chance for early intervention, a key part of crisis cases.

### **The 988 vision**

State officials and local leaders see the 988 federal rollout as an opportunity to leverage funding and energy to revitalize Washington’s system of crisis care.

A [draft operational plan](#) submitted to the Washington Legislature at the start of the year envisions two new technical systems to go along with 988 and help streamline communication between agencies: an

integrated referral system and a crisis call center hub system. The federal government has selected contractors to build these tools, but the state has not yet decided whether to use those vendors or build a different system altogether.

The referral system would include a provider directory for the public, as well as an electronic health record system that would allow dispatchers to see mental health advance directives (a legal document that describes the kind of services an individual wants in case their mental health problems become so severe they need help). Crisis workers would also see real-time availability of beds in their region — additions that would greatly connect the crisis system that is currently siloed among many networks.

The call center hub would connect the various hotlines, tribal lines and emergency services dispatch centers into one platform that is cohesive and can easily transfer people. That flexibility would be helpful, since not all emergencies are created equally.

“The caller can start the call requesting one thing and then it becomes apparent over the course of that call that there’s a crisis occurring there,” said Jessica Shook, the president of the Washington Association of Designated Crisis Responders. “But it is not the crisis that they initially called with.”

A crisis might initially be called in as a welfare check or a domestic violence situation among family members, for example. Depending on each case, a dispatcher may send police, fire, EMTs, a mobile crisis team, designated crisis responders or a combination of the above.

In theory, the new 988 system and the accompanying tools will connect the dots and help people in need of mental health services get diverted from the police and even get follow-up care.

The Seattle Police Department has a specialized crisis response team — which pairs an officer with a mental health professional — to respond to some nonemergency crisis calls. But there currently are only nine people on the team, and SPD has received over 2,900 crisis calls this year already. (Some other officers have crisis intervention training, a 40-hour course that teaches them about mental health and de-escalation, and provides resources to share with the community.)

Altogether, the department struggles to keep up with demand and is hopeful 988 will lighten the load. After the rollout, however, law enforcement is still going to respond to some calls. Depending on the situation, officers may need to be dispatched if someone is physically violent or has a weapon, or if social workers need assistance detaining and transporting someone to a hospital.

### **Evergreen challenges**

The state still faces huge challenges before 988 can be part of a truly comprehensive mental health system. Washington, like many states, faces a shortage of mental health workers. Across the board, health care and mental health care organizations have [struggled](#) to retain staff and hire new workers. Many mental health professionals are facing burnout after two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. Salaries in clinics that serve low-income people are not nearly as competitive as in private practice, and to enter the behavioral fields, workers often need a bachelor’s or master’s degree on top of work experience, often leaving them with debt.

Advocates point to a peer model — where people who have experienced mental health challenges can help others — as a possible way to boost the workforce. But the state’s current peer program is limited to patients on Medicaid, and unlike designated crisis responders or higher-level providers, peer advocates are limited in their legal capacity to provide care.

Another big challenge is where to take people who are in crisis. Almost everyone agrees that emergency rooms are not the solution, but most regions in the state have a shortage of crisis stabilization beds. Those beds are meant for a short-term stay for people who need help but are not immediately a threat to themselves or others. People must go voluntarily and they typically stay less than a day, unlike inpatient facilities where people cannot check out and initially spend 72 hours.

King County currently has 46 short-term crisis beds for its 2.2 million residents through the Downtown Emergency Services Center. A 2016 report from the Washington State Institute for Public Policy estimates there are 175 crisis beds across the entire state. For the people Avalos serves in Thurston and Mason counties, there are none.

Some progress on adding beds is being made. For example, the Washington State Department of Commerce is working to get two additional crisis stabilization facilities licensed in King County.

Still for people who are in crisis now, the wait is hard, and the current alternatives are often jail or homelessness.

Shook, from the Washington Association of Designated Crisis Responders, is hopeful for the start of 988 because it could be a first step to a full crisis care system that includes prevention, early intervention and a place for people in crisis to go to.

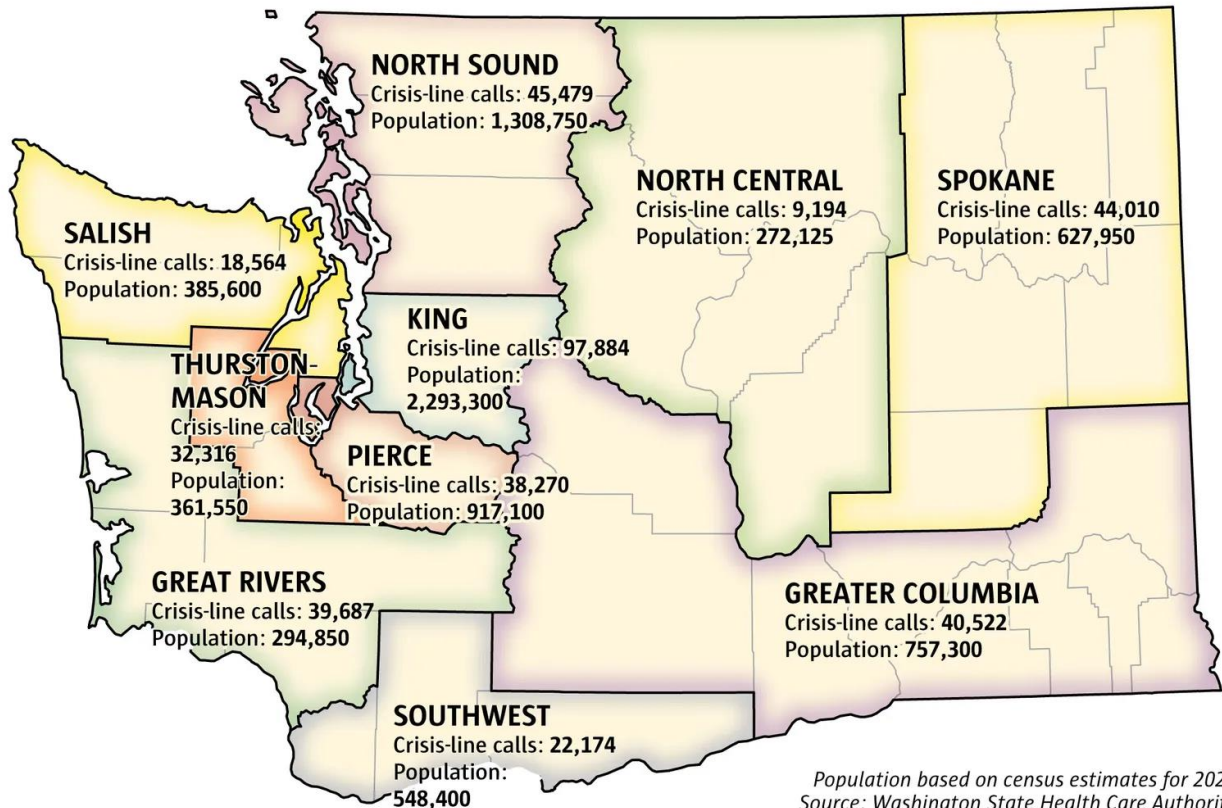
“I would love to have the capability for a 24/7 crisis team,” she said. “I would love to have the capability to be staffed up to respond like firefighters and just be able to hit the ground running and go out the door.

“This is the first time we’ve had this much attention and focus on (crisis response) and that can’t help but lead to improvements and changes to the system.”

## Crisis calls across Washington state

The crisis system is a patchwork of services across local and state agencies. The state is broken up into 10 regions; each runs its own behavioral health system including mobile crisis teams, suicide hotlines, and crisis stabilization facilities.

Below you can find the number of calls to the local crisis line in each region during 2021. Starting in mid-July, callers in need of crisis help will have a new option with the launch of the 988 hotline.



HEADLINE	<b>04/22 OIG: SPD flout mask mandate; violations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3444995/oig-report-spd-flouting-mask-mandate-serious-culture-issue/">https://mynorthwest.com/3444995/oig-report-spd-flouting-mask-mandate-serious-culture-issue/</a>
GIST	<p>A new report released by the Seattle Office of Inspector General (OIG) revealed wide-ranging issues the city had in getting police officers to comply with masking requirements, dating back to the early days of the pandemic.</p> <p>The review was triggered following a complaint made by a community member to the Office of Police Accountability (OPA), who asserted that the Seattle Police Department had engaged in “pervasive non-compliance” with mask mandates. That complaint included “extensive documentation” of unmasked officers in settings where a facial covering was required.</p> <p>Issues with masking among SPD officers have since been documented across numerous agencies and departments. That included “two notices of serious violation of Washington Administrative Code” following a February 2021 citation from the Department of Labor &amp; Industries, where seven SPD employees at the East Precinct were seen “not wearing masks properly or maintaining social distancing.” That led to L&amp;I levying a \$5,400 fine.</p>



L&I issued another citation in July of 2021, after officers — this time near the West Precinct — were again seen not adhering to masking and social distancing requirements, this time while responding to public demonstrations.” Because it was the second citation L&I had issued to the department, the fine was raised to \$12,000.

Prior to that, SPD command staff had repeatedly sent reminders to personnel regarding masking policies between March of 2020 and January of 2021. Each time, mandates from the chief of police, mayor, and assistant chief were reiterated, detailing how officers were required to remain clean-shaven to allow for tight-fitting facial coverings and maintain six feet of distance when possible, eventually noting how violations of the policy would be referred to the OPA.

“These explicit orders were accompanied by many email reminders from supervisors sent throughout the year,” the OIG’s report reads. “However, these communications were not generally successful in obtaining compliance.”

In April of 2020, that saw an SPD assistant chief describe the continued noncompliance as “incredibly disappointing” while addressing precinct captains. Three months later, a “high-risk SPD employee” asked to not return to in-person work, intimating how they were “not comfortable being around as many people that are in our building, especially since no one appears to wear a mask.”

Then in January of 2021, an internal email from an SPD captain described how he was “just stunned at the non-compliance” among officers. In that same month, interim Chief Adrian Diaz sent a message to command staff stating that the department’s policy encouraging “voluntary compliance and supervisor action” had proven to be “not sufficient internally.”

The OIG also spoke to then-OPA Director Andrew Myerberg “regarding the decision to not review mask non-compliance through the lens of insubordination,” driven by how the OPA had “struggled with the extent of non-compliance” across the department. That was in addition to the fact that “others higher in the chain of command” were similarly observed violating the policy.

“Director Myerberg explained that he perceived the mask non-compliance as indicative of a serious culture issue within SPD and stated that it was not sustainable for OPA to be the ‘thought police’ of the Department,” the OIG report notes.

A physician contracted by SPD to manage COVID exposures provided further insight into some of the more common objections officers had related to policies mandating eye protection in addition to the wearing of N95 masks. He asserted that “some personnel resisted due to concerns of comfort, fogged glasses, communication difficulties, and a belief that the COVID-19 virus was not real.”

Ultimately, the OIG concluded that “the degree of mask order violations appears related to a combination of organization culture and discretionary decisions” in responding to those who flouted the policy.

“However, the challenge is larger than just mitigating the spread of COVID-19,” it added. “SPD management should reframe how the department views matters of public health including COVID-19. Further, compliance – and public safety – may improve if all staff are held accountable for not following orders. Setting the precedent that mask orders do not need to be followed establishes a culture in which future, unrelated orders may be ignored as well.”

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You can read the full OIG report at [this link](#).

HEADLINE	04/22 SPD to hire fewer new officers this year
SOURCE	<a href="https://westseattleblog.com/2022/04/police-staffing-report-shows-southwest-precinct-with-biggest-drop-in-past-year/">https://westseattleblog.com/2022/04/police-staffing-report-shows-southwest-precinct-with-biggest-drop-in-past-year/</a>
GIST	Next Tuesday morning, the City Council’s <b>Public Safety and Human Services Committee</b> is scheduled to get its quarterly update on <a href="#">Seattle Police</a> staffing. The numbers in <a href="#">the presentation document</a> that’s now



available with the agenda online show that SPD now expects to hire fewer new officers this year than originally projected, 98 instead of 125. And a year-to-year comparison shows the staffing shortage is hitting our area the hardest. The precinct-by-precinct numbers show that the **Southwest Precinct**, which covers West Seattle and South Park, has lost the most sworn staff, in number as well as percentages. We compared the table in the 2021 first-quarter report with the table from the same period in 2022.

Here's 2021:

## SPD Precinct Staffing (1/2)

As of March 31, 2021

	PRECINCT												Total
	Citywide		East		North		South		Southwest		West		
Job Category	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	
911	10	72	12	71	20	126	12	86	9	55	14	91	578
Beats	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	9	11
Seattle Center	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Stationmaster	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
Totals	10	72	12	71	20	126	12	86	9	56	17	103	594

And here's 2022:

## SPD Precinct Staffing (1/2)

As of March 31, 2022

Job Category	PRECINCT												Total
	Citywide		East		North		South		Southwest		West		
	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	Sgt	Ofc	
911	5	27	12	76	19	126	12	80	8	50	13	110	538
Beats	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Seattle Center	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Totals	5	27	12	76	19	126	12	80	8	50	14	116	545

Two precincts actually gained sworn staff – East and West – while North lost only 1. But South lost 6 and Southwest lost 7 – down to 58 sergeants and officers in our area, from 65 in the same period last year.

Precinct supervisors have mentioned multiple times at community meetings we've covered that staffing is precariously low at times – [at HPAC in January](#), for example, the group was told the precinct has been as low as 3 officers some nights, when the minimum per shift is supposed to be more than three times that.

So why is the staffing pain so uneven? We're asking.

Meantime, next Tuesday morning's 9:30 am meeting of the committee, which West Seattle/South Park Councilmember **Lisa Herbold** chairs, includes a discussion of a proposal to bring back hiring incentives. [The agenda](#) includes information on how to watch, and comment at, the meeting.

HEADLINE	04/24 Police misconduct costing taxpayers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/police-misconduct-is-costing-washington-taxpayers-millions-is-george-floyds-murder-one-of-the-reasons/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/police-misconduct-is-costing-washington-taxpayers-millions-is-george-floyds-murder-one-of-the-reasons/</a>
GIST	<p>Giovonn Joseph-McDade, Tommy Le and Brent Heath likely never met each other in life.</p> <p>But in death, they represent a growing trend among those who died at the hands of police under questionable circumstances in Washington state.</p> <p>Lawsuits filed over their violent deaths resulted in more than a dozen multimillion-dollar settlements in 2021 as cities and counties increasingly decide to forgo civil trials and offer grieving families a kind of financial accountability. While settling police misconduct cases before they reach a courtroom is hardly a new tactic for risk managers, the steadily rising numbers and amounts are.</p> <p>Last year saw Washington cities and counties settle 15 misconduct and wrongful death cases for a total of at least \$34.3 million, a 146% increase over what was paid out in 2020 — and a 363.5% increase over the 2019 amount, according to data compiled by The Seattle Times through public disclosure, court dockets and news accounts.</p> <p>In fact, Washington cities and counties have paid more than \$100 million over the past five years to resolve lawsuits and claims arising from allegations of police misconduct.</p> <p>The data shows that the number and size of settlements have grown precipitously over that time period — from \$1.15 million in 2017 to the more than \$34 million in 2021, a 2,990% increase. Nearly two-thirds of the total \$100 million has been paid since the May 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis officers renewed outrage over unchecked police brutality and bolstered the Black Lives Matter movement.</p> <p>“No amount of money will replace a life,” said Sonia Joseph, the mother of 20-year-old Giovonn Joseph-McDade, who last year settled a lawsuit over her son’s 2017 shooting death with the city of Kent for \$4.4 million. “It was insulting, but for my family it was never about the money. It was about raising awareness. And I wanted to raise the bar for the families who come after us.”</p> <p>“The climate is changing,” said Joseph, who now sits on the <a href="#">state’s Criminal Justice Training Commission</a>. “I think people in the community are aware of what is happening ... There’s no longer that veil that police are perfect.”</p> <p>The trend shows no indication of slacking off. Legal settlements in police abuse claims and lawsuits reached in the first three months of 2022 total nearly \$19 million, just about half the amount paid in all of last year, the data shows.</p> <p>The settlements reviewed by The Times involve 56 high-profile police incidents from across the state, including allegations of excessive force — such as fatal and nonfatal shootings — wrongful arrests and officer negligence.</p> <p><b>Uncertain verdicts</b></p> <p>“Two distinct reasons” are driving the trend, said professor John Rappaport, who teaches criminal law at the University of Chicago and has conducted research into how insurance carriers can influence police behavior.</p> <p>“The first is the now-unpredictable nature of what a jury might do if a case goes to trial,” he said. Growing public concerns over police violence means “there is a greater uncertainty when it comes to verdicts. Not only might you lose, but you need to worry about how much it will cost you if you do.”</p> <p>The other related reason, Rappaport said, is the advent of video, either from police body- and dash-cameras, or from bystanders armed with the now-ubiquitous smartphones recording police interactions. Some of the footage — like the agonizing video of Floyd’s murder, or the police shooting of <a href="#">12-year-old Tamir Rice</a> — have shocked the public conscience and shaken confidence in law enforcement.</p>

“The decisions to settle these lawsuits, or take them to trial, is based on uncertainty” of the outcome, Rappaport said. “Body-camera and cellphone video is helping to raise that uncertainty and the effect has been to drive up the settlement rate.”

Risk managers, the Washington Cities Insurance Authority and officials with the city of Seattle and King County declined to weigh in on Rappaport’s theories. None was willing to be interviewed for this story.

### **More settlements, more money**

What the data demonstrates is evident in Washington — more settlements for more money — is being seen elsewhere around the country as well, Rappaport said.

Another factor is at work in pushing settlements in some cases: criminal prosecutions of some officers. While still a rarity, publicity surrounding those incidents plays into the increasing public skepticism of law enforcement, officials say.

Video played a key role in the recent decisions by prosecutors to charge police officers in the death of [Manny Ellis in Tacoma](#) and [Jesse Sarey in Auburn](#). The Ellis family received a \$4 million settlement in March from the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department, whose deputies were on the scene when Ellis died, with claims against the involved Tacoma officers still pending.

Sarey’s family settled with the city of Auburn for \$4 million last year, according to information provided by the Washington Cities Insurance Authority, an insurance pool that provides coverage to roughly 90 small and mid-sized police agencies statewide.

Auburn in 2020 paid \$1.25 million to settle a [lawsuit filed by the](#) family of Isaiah Obet, another man killed by the same police officer who shot Sarey. That payment came shortly after that officer, Jeff Nelson, was charged with murder and assault for Sarey’s death.

Those criminal charges were the first filed against any police officer in Washington since 2009, when an Everett police officer was charged for a fatal shooting outside a bar. [That officer, Troy Meade, was acquitted.](#) Before that, it had been nearly 40 years since an officer was charged in a homicide.

Nelson’s charges were followed by criminal charges against three Tacoma officers in Ellis’ death.

Those recent criminal charges were made possible by changes in the law governing the police use of deadly force that came with the passage of I-940 in 2019, a citizen initiative championed by families who lost loved ones to police violence. [The initiative passed with strong support](#) underscoring widespread concerns about the use of force by officers. Before I-940 passed, Washington’s uniquely restrictive statute — which required a finding of “malice” — [made it virtually impossible to charge an officer with murder.](#)

### **Unexpected, unprecedented verdict**

The passage of I-940 followed another red-flag incident in 2017 that rattled risk managers and police agencies in Washington: an unprecedented and unexpected multimillion-dollar federal jury verdict in a civil rights lawsuit filed by the family of a young father killed by police in Pierce County. [The jury awarded the family of Leonard Thomas \\$15.1 million](#) after a Lakewood-led SWAT team surrounded his house and shot the unarmed Thomas as he held his 4-year-old son in his arms.

The verdict included \$6.5 million in punitive damages against three Lakewood officers, including Mike Zaro, who is currently the city’s police chief, finding they acted maliciously, recklessly and with callous disregard in storming Thomas’ house, shooting the family dog, and giving a police sniper the green light to shoot the 30-year-old Black man. Lakewood officers insisted Thomas was holding his son hostage, but the unanimous jury didn’t buy it.

Even without video, the jury found against the city on every cause of action after hearing testimony that one of the SWAT officers, Mike Wiley, exclaimed that the sniper round that tore through Thomas' abdomen was a "million-dollar frickin' shot."

Lakewood negotiated a [\\$13.1 million settlement](#) with the family in 2018, [after the trial judge rejected their argument that the jury had been influenced by race.](#)

Annalesa Thomas, Leonard's mother, said at the time she didn't realize the significance of the verdict, which remains unprecedented in Western Washington in a police civil rights and wrongful death case.

"We were so naive," said Thomas, who also sits on the Criminal Justice Training Commission. Her husband, Fred — who the jury found was wrongfully arrested that night trying to save his son — was [appointed by Gov. Jay Inslee to the advisory board](#) overseeing formation of a new Office of Independent Investigations for police shootings.

"That lawsuit was the only way for us to see any justice," she said. The Pierce County Prosecutor's Office had found the shooting was justified and declined to file criminal charges against any of the officers involved.

"The only thing is, you have to live with the stigma that people actually think you did it for the money," she said.

The verdict was particularly stunning since Lakewood and its attorneys followed what has historically been the defense pattern in handling police-abuse lawsuits.

Up until then, cities and counties routinely rolled the dice and took the cases to trial, where plaintiffs — whose dead loved ones often had troubled backgrounds or criminal histories — faced the daunting task of challenging the word of a sworn officer of the law. By putting the uniformed officer on the witness stand to recite a well-rehearsed version of events, police were all but assured of a favorable verdict.

When there were settlements in these earlier cases, they were largely for smaller amounts, often considered "nuisance payments" doled out simply to make the litigation go away.

No longer. The shock of the Thomas verdict and incidents such as the deaths of Ellis and Sarey locally and, nationally, cases such as the 2020 murder of Floyd and others, has risk managers reevaluating their strategies.

"Municipal risk managers certainly seem more risk averse and seem to be paying relatively higher settlement amounts after George Floyd's murder," said Seattle civil rights attorney Gabe Galanda, who has negotiated several high-profile settlements, including a [\\$2 million payout last month \(March 2022\) to the family of Stonechild Chiefstick](#), who was killed by a Poulsbo officer in 2019.

But Galanda said the system is still stacked against the plaintiffs in police misconduct cases.

"Involved officers, guild lawyers, purported investigators, municipal attorneys and other state actors still conspire to conceal and falsify evidence and obfuscate the truth from the public, especially when there's not nine minutes and 30 seconds of clear and convincing videotaped evidence of the killing," he said, referring to the Floyd case.

"These dynamics persist notwithstanding nascent police reforms and continue to impact whether cases settle or get tried before a fact-finder," he said.

"There has been a change," added Jack Connelly, one of the attorneys who tried the Leonard Thomas case in U.S. District Court. "For the first time, we have video evidence of what really happened."

“However, it’s still too easy for police to issue a statement and make up what occurred and have that be accepted by prosecutors,” Connelly said.

Tim Ford, a Seattle civil rights attorney who, like Connelly, has been trying civil rights cases for close to three decades, agreed that “there is more skepticism of police” and that, as a result, risk managers and civil defense lawyers are more amenable to settlements.

“It is certainly true here,” he said.

### **Risk managers ‘take a pass’**

No municipal risk managers, either locally or nationally, would discuss the issue.

The New York City-based Insurance Information Institute, which provides training and information to insurance providers around the country, said it “doesn’t have enough data on this [issue],” and suggested talking to Marsh McLennan, also headquartered in New York, which advertises itself as a “global leader in insurance broking and risk management.”

“I appreciate you thinking of Marsh for your story,” said the company’s U.S. media director Sally Roberts. “Our public entity team, however, would like to take a pass on this one.”

The city of Seattle’s Department of Finance and Administrative Services said it doesn’t track police settlement data and deferred to the city attorney’s office, which defends such cases. The office declined to be interviewed on the topic, and referred back to the Department of Finance. A city attorney spokesman said the office’s attorneys “assess the risks and opportunities in prevailing in each individual case, including the cost to litigate and how a jury might perceive an action.”

The King County Prosecutor’s Office, whose civil division defends civil rights cases against sheriff’s deputies and jail corrections officers, declined to discuss its risk management procedures.

Likewise, the director of the Washington Cities Insurance Authority, an insurance pool covering roughly 90 state police agencies, declined to discuss police risk management or remark on the data.

The WCIA and other municipal pools are collectives that use premiums paid by the individual cities to either purchase insurance or actually provide the insurance themselves. Having a number of cities and counties pay spreads out the costs of risk management and can help in purchasing broader coverage. Like most insurance purchases, they pay a deductible or absorb the costs when something occurs that isn’t covered by the policy.

Cities and counties purchase insurance as protection against negligence or liability claims by their employees or outside entities, much as a homeowner buys insurance to protect against accidents and disasters. In some cases, larger government agencies are self-insured, but still purchase secondary policies to cover unexpectedly large payouts or unanticipated liability.

Risk managers within those agencies — sometimes the city or county attorney, sometimes an outside individual — review claims made against the government or its employees to weigh possible liability. In some cases, they’ll make an offer to settle, or negotiate with the claimant to find a compromise both can live with. Sometimes, they’ll take a claim to trial.

The WCIA’s 2020 annual report notes that the U.S. has experienced “a social justice movement that placed an emphasis on police reform and accountability.

“The accountability sought by the movement resulted in law enforcement claim exposures significantly increasing, placing pressure on our ability to renew insurance coverage in addition to rates we were required to pay to obtain that coverage,” the report said.

	Big verdicts, such as the Leonard Thomas case and “high profile settlements,” have resulted in changes in the way the WCIA reviews and values such claims, according to the report.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Rice cooker delays Biden departure</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://patch.com/washington/seattle/rice-cooker-delays-bidens-seattle-departure">https://patch.com/washington/seattle/rice-cooker-delays-bidens-seattle-departure</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — A suspicious package kept President Joe Biden in Puget Sound a little later than anticipated Friday, delaying his helicopter trip from Auburn to the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and moving Air Force One down the runway while investigators cleared the area.</p> <p>Perry Cooper, a spokesperson for SEA, told Patch that security measures turned up a suspicious item inside a vehicle parked in a warehouse parking lot north of the airport. The president and his team held in Auburn while investigators cleared the potential threat, which the Port of Seattle Police Department eventually determined was a rice cooker.</p> <p>Once the all-clear was given, Biden flew to the runway aboard Marine One and departed Seattle for Philadelphia a little behind schedule, taking flight just after 4:30 p.m. — about two hours late.</p> <p>According to The Seattle Times, the prolonged ground stop led to <a href="#">delays for hundreds</a> of arrivals and departures.</p> <p>The president's Pacific Northwest trip took him to Portland, Ore., where he touted the infrastructure package, followed by <a href="#">three stops in Seattle</a>, including a Democratic fundraiser Thursday night, an executive order signing Friday at Seward Park, and closing at with an event focused on prescription drug prices at Green River College in Auburn.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 FDNY firefighter killed in Brooklyn fire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/nyregion/firefighter-dead-brooklyn.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/nyregion/firefighter-dead-brooklyn.html</a>
GIST	<p>A firefighter was killed after a ceiling gave way in a fire at a home in Brooklyn on Sunday afternoon and another person inside the home was also killed, city officials said.</p> <p>The firefighter who died, Timothy Klein, 31, of Queens, had worked for the Fire Department for six years, Mayor Eric Adams said at a news conference later at Brookdale Hospital.</p> <p>On Sunday night, investigators found another body inside the home but had not publicly identified the person, a city official said. The authorities believe the victim is a 21-year-old autistic man who was reported missing by relatives after the blaze, city officials said.</p> <p>Mr. Klein died when the second floor of the two-story house in Canarsie became engulfed in flames, and the ceiling partially collapsed, fire officials said. He was the second New York City firefighter to die in the line of duty this year.</p> <p>“It gives us great pain and sorrow to announce that New York City has lost one of its bravest, Timothy Klein,” Mr. Adams said. Dozens of police officers and firefighters dressed in gear were at the hospital awaiting Mr. Klein’s family.</p> <p>Mr. Adams said that the injuries of five firefighters were not considered life-threatening. The unidentified victim was found after a police dog trained to detect human remains indicated their presence amid the rubble of the fire, officials said. After conducting a risk assessment with building and housing officials, firefighters went in and retrieved the body.</p> <p>Fire investigators have not determined a cause for the fire, which spread to an adjoining home.</p>



Fire Department officials said they were called to 108-26 Avenue N around 1:40 p.m. and found a private home with a peaked roof in flames. By 2:15 p.m., the fire was raised to a third alarm, drawing more than 100 firefighters to fight the blaze.

Mr. Klein's father was a firefighter, and he had other relatives who worked for the Fire Department, Mr. Adams said. Mr. Adams said that Mr. Klein had spoken at the funeral for [another firefighter, Steven H. Pollard](#), in 2019.

Mr. Klein said he was with Mr. Pollard the night [he died after falling 50 feet from a Brooklyn overpass](#) while responding to a two-car accident. The men were part of the same company, Ladder 170 in Canarsie.

At the funeral, Mr. Klein grew emotional as he spoke about Mr. Pollard's sacrifice.

"Steven Pollard died not thinking of himself but trying to help others," Mr. Klein said, his voice breaking. "We lost a true hero that night."

Mr. Klein graduated from Archbishop Molloy High School in Queens before obtaining his Bachelor of Science degree in sport management from York College of Pennsylvania, according to his profile on LinkedIn. After college, he briefly worked for the New York Rangers marketing department, as a youth basketball coach on Long Island and at an athletic training center in Manhattan, his profile said. He joined the Fire Department in December 2015.

On Sunday, Mr. Klein was on the second floor of the home with three other firefighters when the floor was engulfed in flames, fire officials said. The other firefighters escaped by jumping out of windows or climbing down ladders, but Mr. Klein was not able to get out. The other firefighters worked to reach him but could not get to him in time, fire officials said.

A [firefighter, Jesse Gerhard, died in February](#), a day after responding to a fire in Queens. He suffered a medical episode at his firehouse after helping to evacuate a three-story home that was engulfed in flames.

In January, the worst fire in New York City in three decades [killed 17 people in the Bronx](#), including eight children. The fire was caused by a space heater and quickly filled the 19-story building with smoke.

Laura Kavanagh, the city's acting fire commissioner, mourned Mr. Klein's death at the news conference with the mayor.

"I cannot describe the heartbreak of the F.D.N.Y. today to have lost a member doing what our members do best — putting their lives on the line to save others," she said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Florida governor, Disney ongoing rift</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/article/disney-florida-desantis.html">https://www.nytimes.com/article/disney-florida-desantis.html</a>
GIST	<p>Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida and state lawmakers have revoked a 55-year-old arrangement that gave Disney a special tax status and allowed it to essentially self-govern its 25,000-acre Disney World complex. The loss of that designation is the latest development in an ongoing battle between Mr. DeSantis and the state's largest private employer over a recently passed education bill. How did the rift get to that point? Here is some background.</p> <p><b>What Are Mr. DeSantis and Disney Fighting Over?</b></p> <p>In March, <a href="#">the governor signed a bill</a> that prohibits classroom instruction and discussion about sexual orientation and gender identity in certain elementary school classrooms.</p>



The “Parental Rights in Education” law, often referred to by critics as the [“Don’t Say Gay” bill](#), has led to debate around the nation over the impact that law and others like it could have on schoolchildren. The Florida law could also change how counseling and other mental health services operate in schools.

The legislation has been heralded by conservatives and scorned by L.G.B.T.Q. activists and many schoolteachers. Although [initially silent](#), Disney joined the debate when its chief executive, Bob Chapek, [made several remarks](#) criticizing the bill.

Republican lawmakers in the state, including Mr. DeSantis, a potential Republican candidate for president in 2024, were not happy with Disney’s response. “If Disney wants to pick a fight, they chose the wrong guy,” Mr. DeSantis wrote in a fund-raising email to supporters.

### **What Are Conservatives Saying About Disney?**

In response to Disney’s denouncement of the education legislation, Mr. DeSantis and Fox News hosts began [to decry what they call](#) “Woke Disney” politics.

It was not the first time the corporation had been accused of adopting stances that conservatives deemed went too far. Within the past few years, Disney has made several changes to its theme parks and streaming services that have drawn their criticism.

This includes a [“retheming”](#) of Splash Mountain to disassociate its connection to the inspiration of the ride, the 1946 film “Song of the South,” in which a former slave tells African folk tales. Disney’s streaming service also [pulled the film](#) from its collection.

Disney World also revamped its [Pirates of the Caribbean ride](#) by removing a scene depicting pirates selling women in an auction. Disney also recently removed the [“Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls” greeting](#) from some of its fireworks shows to be more inclusive.

The dispute between Disney and Florida lawmakers is indicative of the mounting pressure corporations face [to get involved in partisan battles](#).

### **What Did Disney’s Previous Special Tax Status Mean?**

Disney World’s [previously held special status](#), which began in 1967, let the megaresort essentially function as its own municipal government. Although the theme park is sandwiched between two counties, it operated as a special zone — known as the [Reedy Creek Improvement District](#).

Such a designation meant that the theme park could make its own decisions on the planning and permitting process for construction on its property, levy taxes to pay for its own fire-and-medical-response services and even generate some of its own electricity. Through that status, the company saved millions of dollars annually in fees and taxes, according to experts.

Disney leveraged the benefits of that designation to build out its resort, which today includes multiple theme parks, hotels and a massive bus fleet.

[With its special status revoked](#), the resort, which employs roughly 80,000 people, now must negotiate with the governments in Orange and Osceola counties over using its services. The change could also leave its residents with higher taxes, with some experts estimating up to a 20 percent hike.

### **How Has Disney Responded to Losing Its Self-Governing Privileges?**

Thus far, Disney has not responded to the loss of its special designation.

But several leaders from other states have responded to the news and have invited the company to move Disney World there instead.

Gov. Jared Polis of Colorado said that lawmakers in his state “[don’t meddle in affairs of companies.](#)” A county judge in Fort Bend County, Texas, [said that](#) Disney could “visit Fort Bend County as your next destination while you face attacks from the modern day political extremists” like the Florida governor.

### What’s Next?

What Disney will do is not clear. It could apply to re-establish the special designation. The company could also instead reduce its future investment in the resort’s expansion.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Arab militia kills scores in Sudan’s Darfur</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/africa/sudan-darfur-janjaweed.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/africa/sudan-darfur-janjaweed.html</a>
GIST	<p>KHARTOUM, Sudan — Hundreds of Arab militia fighters, many riding motorbikes or driving vehicles mounted with guns, attacked a village in Sudan’s western Darfur region on Sunday, torching homes and shops and killing at least 150 people, aid groups and United Nations officials said.</p> <p>The violence, which later spread to a nearby town, was the latest in a series of clashes involving Arab and ethnic African groups in Darfur in recent months, and one of the country’s deadliest episodes in years. The attack highlighted the growing security vacuum that experts say has worsened in tandem with a political crisis in Sudan, where the military seized power in October.</p> <p>The General Coordination for Refugees and Displaced in Darfur, an aid agency, said 168 people had been killed and another 98 injured in the violence around Kereneik in West Darfur.</p> <p>A United Nations official in Sudan confirmed that account, saying the U.N. had received reports of 150 and 200 deaths. The attack started at dawn, when hundreds of armed men encircled Kereneik before opening fire, later going house to house and killing civilians, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the lack of permission to speak publicly.</p> <p>In a statement late Sunday, Volker Perthes, the U.N. envoy to Sudan, deplored “the heinous killings of civilians” in Kereneik and called for an immediate end to the violence and a transparent investigation into its causes.</p> <p>Adam Regal, a spokesman for the aid group, laid blame for the violence on the Janjaweed, the Arab militia responsible for the worst atrocities in Darfur since conflict erupted there about 20 years ago. Mr. Regal circulated photos that showed swathes of charred buildings, some still on fire, and apparent Janjaweed fighters.</p> <p>Sudan’s military ruler, Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, dispatched soldiers to Darfur by air to contain the violence. But witnesses said the attack had taken place with little apparent resistance from the security forces already deployed to the area, including troops from Sudan’s military and members of the Rapid Support Forces paramilitary group.</p> <p>By evening, the violence has spread to the town of El Geneina. Shooting erupted outside the main hospital where Arab fighters brought wounded men to be treated, causing the streets to empty as residents feared they would also come under attack, witnesses said.</p> <p>“The situation in the town is upside down,” said Ibrahim Musa, a resident of El Geneina, speaking by phone. Doctors, government officials and militia commanders had been killed during clashes in the area during the day, he said.</p> <p>By midnight, the streets had emptied as residents stayed home, worried about what would come next. “All the people are waiting,” he said. “There is some patrolling of security forces in the streets. We don’t know what will happen in the morning.”</p>

At one level, the bloodshed was another tragic episode in the long-running cycle of violence between ethnic Arab pastoralists and non-Arab farming communities in Darfur.

The worst violence occurred in the 2000s, when Janjaweed fighters backed by the Sudanese military carried out a ruthless campaign that led to charges of war crimes and genocide. Earlier this month, Ali Kushayb, a Janjaweed commander, went on trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, where he faces 31 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He denies the charges.

Hopes that the cycle of violence in Darfur would be broken after the ouster of Sudan's longtime dictator, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, in 2019, have come to nothing. Planned reform of Sudan's security forces has yet to start. And things have only worsened since the October coup, led by General al-Burhan, that has plunged the distant capital, Khartoum, into political chaos.

Since General al-Burhan ousted Sudan's civilian prime minister, his efforts to forge a new government have been frustrated by an array of centrifugal forces, most notably the street protesters who clash regularly with the riot police, demanding a return to civilian-led rule.

And tension is quietly building with his deputy, Lt. Gen. Mohamed Hamdan, a former Janjaweed commander from Darfur who now commands the powerful R.S.F. paramilitary force, according to western diplomats.

A proposed new security force for Darfur, combining local armed groups with official Sudanese forces, envisaged under a 2020 peace agreement, has yet to come into being. As a result, even small incidents can flare into violence.

The current clashes started on Friday, a day after the bodies of two Arab nomads suspected of cattle rustling were found near Kereneik, the U.N. official said. Arab fighters seeking revenge attacked the village, prompted clashes with local armed groups that spiraled until the attack on Sunday.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Wildfires rage across 3 states: evacuations</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/us/wildfires-arizona-new-mexico.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/us/wildfires-arizona-new-mexico.html</a>
GIST	<p>McKenna Thompson, 30, was not too worried when she learned last week that she was among thousands of people across Arizona, Nebraska and New Mexico who would be forced to leave as wildfires approached.</p> <p>She had been driving back home to Flagstaff, Ariz., when she heard about the evacuation order. As smoke swirled around her car and the skies darkened, she soon felt as if she were “looking at hell,” she said on Sunday. She picked up her 2-year-old son and her mother and drove to a cafe to wait out the fire.</p> <p>A few hours later, she learned that her home had burned down.</p> <p>Ms. Thompson was caught up in the Tunnel Fire, which officials estimate has damaged or destroyed 30 homes. Displaced families have been left with rubble, ashes and a harrowing reminder of what they’ve lost.</p> <p>“Everything is gone,” Ms. Thompson said.</p> <p>The Tunnel Fire was one of many wildfires this past week that have collectively scorched more than 150,000 acres and forced the evacuations of at least 4,000 homes, officials said. The fires, which have been blamed for at least one death, are part of an early and active season across the country, as wildfires have also plagued <a href="#">California</a>, <a href="#">Colorado</a> and <a href="#">Texas</a>.</p> <p>Corey Mead, a National Weather Service forecaster, said that Nebraska had seen “above normal” activity during its current fire season. The governor of New Mexico, Michelle Lujan Grisham, said that the fires</p>

had come well before the beginning of the state's wildfire season. "It's going to be a tough summer," she said.

Wildfires are increasing in size and intensity in the United States, and wildfire seasons are growing longer. Research has suggested that heat and dryness associated with global warming are major reasons for the increase in bigger and more powerful fires.

In New Mexico, Ms. Lujan Grisham said at a news conference on Saturday that, of the fires burning in her state, the largest threat was the [Calf Canyon fire](#), east of Santa Fe, which put more than 900 homes at risk.

The Calf Canyon fire has combined with the Hermits Peak fire, about 12 miles northwest of Las Vegas, N.M., at the base of Hermits Peak in the Pecos Wilderness. The Hermits Peak fire started on April 6 after "unexpected erratic winds" from a prescribed fire in the area caused the blaze to grow, officials reported.

Ms. Lujan Grisham said that more than 200 structures had been burned and that 1,000 firefighters had been dispatched. By Sunday, the Calf Canyon fire had burned more than [54,000 acres and was 12 percent](#) contained.

Two other fires in the state, the [Cooks Peak Fire](#) and the [Mitchell Fire](#), have burned 52,000 acres and 25,000 acres, the state fire authorities said.

More than 3,400 homes in New Mexico were under mandatory evacuations, and more than 3,000 homes were under voluntary evacuations because of the wildfires.

Julie Anne Overton, a spokeswoman for the Santa Fe National Forest, said that a storm on Sunday night might bring relief to parts of New Mexico, but that the weather would be dry and warm again later this week. She added that it was rare to see fire conditions in April.

"I think we're seeing climate change in action," she said on Sunday.

Coconino County in Northern Arizona was under a state of emergency as firefighters struggled to contain the Tunnel Fire, which is about 14 miles northeast of Flagstaff. More than 750 households in the area had to evacuate, [according to the governor's office](#).

The fire in Coconino County, which began on April 17, was only 3 percent contained as of Sunday and had already burned more than 21,000 acres.

One of the casualties of the Tunnel Fire has been the [Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument](#), which has been "burned in its entirety," the park said on [Facebook](#).

The monument, which occupies 3,040 acres and is surrounded by Coconino National Forest, is centered around a cinder cone that is the youngest volcano of the largest volcanic field in the contiguous United States.

In Nebraska, [one person was killed and three firefighters were injured](#) as wildfires that began on Friday, fueled by high winds and dry grass, burned throughout the western and central regions of the state, the authorities said.

A spokeswoman for the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency said on Sunday that there were reports of additional injuries in other fires but that she did not immediately have specific details.

The state's National Guard deployed trucks and at least three helicopters to help, and the state's Wildland Incident Response and Assistance Team sent specialists to several fires, the emergency management agency said on Saturday.

HEADLINE	04/24 France president wins reelection
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/europe/french-election-results-macron-le-pen.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/europe/french-election-results-macron-le-pen.html</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS — <a href="#">Emmanuel Macron</a> won a second term as president of France, triumphing on Sunday over <a href="#">Marine Le Pen</a>, his far-right challenger, after a campaign where his promise of stability prevailed over the temptation of an extremist lurch.</p> <p>Projections at the close of voting, which are generally reliable, showed Mr. Macron, a centrist, gaining 58.5 percent of the vote to Ms. Le Pen’s 41.5 percent. His victory was much narrower than <a href="#">in 2017, when the margin was 66.1 percent to 33.9 percent</a> for Ms. Le Pen, but wider than appeared likely two weeks ago.</p> <p>Speaking to a crowd massed on the Champ de Mars in front of a twinkling Eiffel Tower, a solemn Mr. Macron said his was a victory for “a more independent France and a stronger Europe.” He added: “Our country is riddled with so many doubts, so many divisions. We will have to be strong, but nobody will be left by the side of the road.”</p> <p>Ms. Le Pen conceded defeat in her third attempt to become president, but bitterly criticized the “brutal and violent methods” of Mr. Macron, without explaining what she meant. She vowed to fight on to secure a large number of representatives in legislative elections in June, declaring that “French people have this evening shown their desire for a strong counter power to Emmanuel Macron.”</p> <p>At a critical moment in Europe, with fighting raging in Ukraine after the Russian invasion, <a href="#">France rejected a candidate hostile to NATO, to the European Union</a>, to the United States, and to its fundamental values that hold that no French citizens should be discriminated against because they are Muslim.</p> <p>Jean-Yves Le Drian, the foreign minister, said the result reflected “the mobilization of French people for the maintenance of their values and against a narrow vision of France.”</p> <p>The French do not generally love their presidents, and none had succeeded in being re-elected since 2002, let alone by a 17-point margin. Mr. Macron’s unusual achievement in securing five more years in power reflects his effective stewardship over the Covid-19 crisis, his rekindling of the economy, and his political agility in occupying the entire center of the political spectrum.</p> <p>Ms. Le Pen, softening her image if not her anti-immigrant nationalist program, rode a wave of alienation and disenchantment <a href="#">to bring the extreme right closer to power than at any time since 1944</a>. Her National Rally party has joined the mainstream, even if at the last minute many French people clearly voted for Mr. Macron to ensure that France not succumb to the xenophobic vitriol of the darker passages of its history.</p> <p>Ms. Le Pen is a <a href="#">longtime sympathizer with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia</a>, whom she visited at the Kremlin during her last campaign in 2017. She would almost certainly have pursued policies that weakened the united allied front to save Ukraine from Russia’s assault; offered Mr. Putin a breach to exploit in Europe; and undermined the European Union, whose engine has always been a joint Franco-German commitment to it.</p> <p>If Brexit was a blow to unity, a French nationalist quasi-exit, as set out in Ms. Le Pen’s proposals, would have left the European Union on life support. That, in turn, would have crippled an essential guarantor of peace on the continent in a volatile moment.</p> <p>Olaf Scholz, the German chancellor, declared that Mr. Macron’s win was “a vote of confidence in Europe.” Boris Johnson, the British prime minister, congratulated the French leader and called France “one of our closest and most important allies.”</p> <p>Mr. Scholz and two other European leaders had taken the unusual step last week of making clear the importance of a vote against Ms. Le Pen in an opinion article in the daily newspaper Le Monde. The letter was a reflection of the anxiety in European capitals and Washington that preceded the vote.</p>

“It is the choice between a democratic candidate, who believes that France is stronger in a powerful and autonomous European Union, and a far-right candidate, who openly sides with those who attack our freedom and our democracy,” they wrote.

Mr. Macron’s second victory felt different from his first. Five years ago, he was a 39-year-old wunderkind bursting on the French political scene with a promise to bury sterile left-right divisions and build a more just, equal, open and dynamic society. He organized a massive celebration in the main courtyard of the Louvre to mark the dawn of a new political era in France.

Sunday night, given the war in Europe, he asked for sobriety from his supporters. As Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy,” the European hymn, played (but much more softly than in 2017), he walked onto the Champ de Mars holding the hand of his wife, Brigitte. Children surrounded the couple; the choreography conveyed simplicity and humility.

Mr. Macron has often been criticized for an aloofness bordering on arrogance during his first term.

“We avoided a certain form of violence. I am relieved,” said Eric Maus, 64, a Macron supporter. “But I feel like I am handing my daughter an uncertain world where the extreme right scores so high.”

Mr. Macron succeeded in spurring growth, slashing unemployment and [instilling a start-up tech culture](#), but was unable to address growing inequality or simmering anger among the alienated and the struggling in areas of urban blight and rural remoteness. Societal divisions sharpened as incomes stagnated, prices rose and factories moved abroad.

As a result, Mr. Macron’s political capital is more limited, even if his clear victory has saved France from a dangerous tilt toward xenophobic nationalism and given him momentum ahead of the June legislative elections.

Still, many of the 7.7 million voters who had supported the left-wing candidate [Jean-Luc Mélenchon](#) in the first round of the presidential election on April 10 voted only reluctantly for Mr. Macron to keep Ms. Le Pen from power. Assina Channa, a Muslim of Algerian descent voting in the suburb of Saint-Denis north of Paris, said, “Nothing is going to change [but I had no choice](#).”

Ms. Le Pen had [proposed a ban on the Muslim head scarf](#) and has regularly equated Islam with violence in the country with the largest Muslim community in western Europe. “At least he doesn’t threaten us like she does,” Ms. Channa said.

Mr. Macron acknowledged that “many of our compatriots voted for me today not to support my ideas but to form a dam against the extreme right.” He thanked them and said “I am now entrusted with their sense of duty, their attachment to the Republic and their respect for the differences expressed these past weeks.”

Some 28 percent of the electorate abstained, three percentage points higher than in 2017, and it appeared that more than 13 million people had voted for Ms. Le Pen and the extreme right. “The anger and the disagreements that led my compatriots to vote for this project must also find an answer,” Mr. Macron said.

It was a speech not of soaring rhetoric but of sober realism, almost at times contrition, reflecting his recognition of a starkly divided France and perhaps also his inattention to those for whom life has been hardest.

The dreams of radical change of 2017 have been supplanted by fears of political confrontation over the summer, in part because the dislike of Mr. Macron among his opponents is strong, and in part because the legislative elections in June could result in a National Assembly less pliant to his will.

Constantly adjusting his positions, extending the circle of his allies and refining his ideas, Mr. Macron has proved himself a consummate politician, suffocating any would-be moderate challengers. He engineered



the near total demise of the center-left Socialist Party and the center-right Republicans, the two political forces at the heart of postwar French politics. It was a remarkable feat.

But there was a price to pay for all this. The old structure of French politics has collapsed, and it is less clear how the violent conflicts of society can be mediated.

Those conflicts have become more acute as anger has grown in the parts of France that have felt neglected, even forgotten, by the elites in major cities. By addressing these concerns, and promising a series of tax cuts to help people cope with rising prices for gas and electricity, Ms. Le Pen built an effective campaign.

Her message, for some voters, was that she would care for and protect them while their president seemed to have other concerns. But her nationalist message also resonated among people angered by undocumented immigrants entering the country and seeking scapegoats for the country's problems.

The president's problems have reflected both his personality and political choices. His highly personalized top-down style of government owed more to Bonaparte than to the democratic opening he had said he would bring to the French presidential system. His attempts to force march Europe toward a vision of "strategic autonomy" backed by its own integrated military has met resistance in the countries like Poland that are most attached to America as a European power.

Emerging from the moderate left of the political system, and supported by many Socialists five years ago, Mr. Macron veered to the right both in his initial economic policy and in a much-criticized decision to confront what he called "Islamist separatism" by shutting down several mosques and Islamic associations — often on flimsy legal grounds.

He judged that he had more to gain on the right than to fear on the fragmented left of the political spectrum in a country whose psyche has been deeply marked by several Islamist terrorist attacks since 2015. In a sense, his victory proved him correct, the master of a broad web of adjustable allegiances that left his opponents floundering.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 World govts refuse pick sides Russia war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/asia/cold-war-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/24/world/asia/cold-war-ukraine.html</a>
GIST	<p>BANGKOK — As the bonds of traditional alliances fray across the globe, the <a href="#">Royal Thai Army</a>, the United States' oldest treaty partner in Asia, has cast a wide net.</p> <p>This year, with the world reeling from <a href="#">Russia's invasion of Ukraine</a>, Thai soldiers hosted American troops for Cobra Gold, annual military exercises that are one of the largest shows of force in the Asia Pacific. A few months before, they participated in Shared Destiny, peacekeeping drills run by the People's Liberation Army of China. And in 2020, the Thais hedged their bets further, signing an agreement for their cadets to receive training at a defense academy in Moscow.</p> <p>The geopolitical landscape following <a href="#">the Ukraine invasion</a> has often been likened to that of <a href="#">a new Cold War</a>. While the main antagonists may be the same — the United States, Russia and, increasingly, China — the roles played by much of the rest of the world have changed, reshaping a global order that held for more than three-quarters of a century.</p> <p>Governments representing more than half of humanity have refused to take a side, avoiding the binary accounting of us-versus-them that characterized most of the post-World War II era. In a <a href="#">United Nations General Assembly vote</a> this month to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council, dozens of countries abstained, including Thailand, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico and Singapore. (The resolution succeeded anyway.)</p> <p>Once proxy battlegrounds for superpowers, swaths of Africa, Asia and Latin America are staking their independence. The return of a bloc of nonaligned nations harks back to a period in which leaders of the</p>



post-colonial movement resisted having their destinies shaped by imperialism. It also points to the confidence of smaller countries, no longer dependent on a single ideological or economic patron, to go their own way.

“Without a doubt, the countries of Southeast Asia don’t want to be pulled into a new Cold War or be forced to take sides in any great power competition,” said Zachary Abuza, a security specialist at the National War College in Washington. “As they say in Southeast Asia, when the elephants fight, the grass gets trampled.”

Having to align themselves with one power or another, Mr. Abuza added, left many nations around the world “desperately poor and underdeveloped at the end of the Cold War.”

As a result, even the United States, the Cold War’s victor, cannot count on the support of some of its traditional partners in vocally condemning Russia for its attack on a sovereign, democratic nation. The NATO-led intervention in Libya in 2011 and the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 have only heightened mistrust of the West. Both military actions left countries in those regions struggling with the political fallout for years after.

“The crux of the matter is that African countries feel infantilized and neglected by Western countries, which are also accused of not living up to their soaring moral rhetoric on sovereignty and territorial sanctity,” said Ebenezer Obadare, senior fellow for Africa studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Indonesia, a sprawling democracy once ruled by a dictator favored by the United States for his anti-communist stance, has said that it will welcome President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia when the country hosts the Group of 20 meetings this year. It, too, abstained in the U.N. vote to remove Russia from the Human Rights Council.

“Our government has adopted the questionable strategy of trying to ignore the biggest geopolitical earthquake in 70 years in our agenda as this year’s G-20 President, which kind of blows my mind,” said Tom Lembong, a former trade minister.

Other U.S. allies have characterized their decision to diversify as a function of American absenteeism. Last year, as China spread its vaccine diplomacy around the world, the United States was seen initially as hoarding its pandemic supplies.

Before that, during Donald J. Trump’s presidency, the United States pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an expansive trade pact that was meant to counter China’s way of doing business. Countries like Vietnam that had staked their reputations on joining felt betrayed, once again, by Washington.

Mexico, a longtime U.S. ally, has emphasized its neutrality, and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has rejected sanctions on Russia.

“Mexico’s neutrality is not neutral,” said Tony Payan of Rice University’s Baker Institute for Public Policy. “Mexico is poking Washington in the eye.”

About one-third of American ambassadorships in Latin America and the Caribbean remain unfilled. The vacancies include Brazil, the largest regional economy, and the Organization of American States.

“Many Latin Americans were realizing that the United States was abandoning them,” said Vladimir Rouvinski, a professor at Icesi University in Cali, Colombia.

Russia cannot count on automatic allegiance from its historical allies, either. Apart from a sense of autocratic camaraderie, ideology is no longer part of Moscow’s allure. Russia has neither the patronage cash nor the geopolitical clout of the Soviet Union.

Venezuela, Russia's staunchest supporter in Latin America, received a high-level American delegation on the heels of the Ukraine invasion. Nicaragua, which became one of the first countries to back Russia's recognition of separatist regions in eastern Ukraine, has since tempered its enthusiasm.

During a March U.N. vote condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Cuba abstained, rather than backing Moscow, although it and Nicaragua later rejected the effort to kick Russia off the Human Rights Council.

"They're trying to walk a fine line between certainly not celebrating the invasion, but also not clearly condemning it, arguing in favor of peace," said Renata Keller, a Cuba expert at the University of Nevada, Reno.

The most noticeable hedging has come from Africa, which accounted for nearly half the countries that abstained in the March U.N. vote.

"We don't know why they are fighting," President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania said in an interview, referring to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

She added that she was "not sure" there was a clear aggressor in the conflict.

For Thailand, the decision to train with the American, Russian and Chinese militaries, as well as to buy weaponry from each country, is part of its long history of balancing between great powers. Deft diplomacy allowed Thailand to emerge as the only nation in the region not to be colonized.

The current drift away from the United States, which used Thailand as a staging ground for the Vietnam War, also stems from the political pedigree of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who came to power in a military coup eight years ago.

"Though Thailand may currently appear as a democracy, it is at heart an autocracy," said Paul Chambers, a lecturer in international affairs at Naresuan University in Thailand. "A regime such as this will have autocratic bedfellows, including in Moscow."

The same holds in Uganda, which receives almost a billion dollars in American aid and is a key Western ally in the fight against regional militancy. Yet the government of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda has been criticized by the United States and the European Union for a pattern of human rights violations.

Mr. Museveni has responded by assailing the West's interference in Libya and Iraq. The president's son, who also commands the country's land forces, tweeted that a "majority of mankind (that are non-white) support Russia's stand in Ukraine."

Uganda, like dozens of other countries, can afford to speak up because of a new top trading partner: China. This economic reality, even if Beijing promises more than it delivers, has shielded nations once dependent on other superpowers from stark geopolitical choices.

Strategically located countries like Djibouti, host to Camp Lemonnier, the largest permanent U.S. base on the African continent, have diversified. A few years ago, after President Ismail Omar Guelleh's invitation, Beijing established its first overseas military outpost in Djibouti. Mr. Guelleh also secured loans from the Chinese to help develop ports, free trade zones and a railway.

Growing Chinese engagement has provided African countries with "alternative investment, alternative markets and alternative ideas of development," said Cobus van Staden, at the South African Institute of International Affairs.

But if the world feels more comfortably multipolar these days, the ripple effects of the fighting in Ukraine are a reminder that globalization quickly links far-flung nations.

	<p>Escalating global prices for fuel, food and fertilizer, all a result of war in Ukraine, have heightened hardship in Africa and Asia. Already contending with a devastating drought, East Africa now has at least 13 million people facing severe hunger.</p> <p>And populations outside of Europe know too well that their refugees — such as Syrians, Venezuelans, Afghans, South Sudanese and the Rohingya of Myanmar — cannot expect the welcome given to displaced Ukrainians. In a race for finite reserves of care, aid groups have warned of the perils of donor fatigue for the world’s most vulnerable.</p> <p>“The whole world,” President Hassan of Tanzania said, referring to Russia and Ukraine, “is affected when these countries are fighting.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 New lives: felons turned firefighters</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/us/felon-firefighters-california/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/us/felon-firefighters-california/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>Camarillo, California</b>CNN — John Reyna peeled off protective gear at the firefighter <a href="#">Ventura Training Center</a> (VTC), and reflected on dark days in prison.</p> <p>“The worst for me was having that feeling of letting my family down,” said the 40-year-old married father with four children. “That was the hardest part for me. I’m a provider.”</p> <p>Reyna and his mentors are confident he will soon earn a good starting salary as a firefighter, with excellent benefits when he leaves the VTC.</p> <p>Reyna pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter for the 2005 shooting death of Daniel Rodriguez in the San Diego city of Alpine. The prosecutor in the case, David Grapilon, told CNN Reyna was not the trigger man, and he has no problem with Reyna, who passed rigorous state prison rules on behavior to work in an inmate camp, becoming a firefighter.</p> <p>“I’d rather see inmates do something productive, like work in the fire camps, instead of sit inside all day watching television,” said the San Diego County Deputy District Attorney. “And there are safeguards. The inmate firefighter program has strict rules on who is accepted.”</p> <p>Reyna is close to completing the 18-month training program for former CA prison camp inmates.</p> <p>Reyna is now part of a growing list of former inmates who will or have been <a href="#">hired full-time by fire departments</a> just California endures massive wildland infernos caused by the climate crisis. CalFire reports the eight largest blazes in state history based on acreage, all occurred since 2017.</p> <p>“We are in some unprecedented times here in California,” said Jeremy Brant, CalFire battalion chief. “We see the environment change, the increase in fire behavior and large growth of fires. The fire seasons are getting longer.”</p> <p>Brant believes the center he runs with CalFire division chief Mike Salas can help meet the demand for more firefighters in California. The VTC, started in 2018, was developed to take ex-convicts who battled fires as prison camp members and prepare them for a career as firefighters.</p> <p>CalFire estimates since 2018, 229 former inmates enrolled in VTC. Of those, 136 got jobs, the majority with CalFire, and 56 are in camp now.</p> <p>Before being released, inmates can learn firefighting skills in other camps run by the state’s Conservation Camp program. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation reports depending on skill level, while still incarcerated, firefighters earn between \$2.90 and \$5.12 a day while in camp. If assigned to an active emergency, CalFire pays prisoners an extra dollar per hour. The California code says the pay</p>

for all prisoners, including those working in kitchens or laundry rooms, ranges from 8 cents to 37 cents per hour. Prison camp is considered a perk, reserved for inmates who demonstrated good behavior.

California's broader conservation camp program houses 1,216 men and 43 women, a demographic ratio proportionate to the state's total prison population, according to a state spokesperson.

Getting into the VTC program after serving their time, requires the participants be carefully screened, had minimum custody status in prison, and are recommended by a prison camp chief.

The training center runs a free, 18-month program allowing the felons to hone the firefighting skills they learned in the Conservation Camp program. The former inmates stay in the Camarillo barracks Monday through Friday.

It's not just outside firefighting drills or classroom instruction on inferno behavior officials think drives the ex-cons to success. The VTC offers extensive mental health as well as addiction counseling in coordination with the California Department of Parole, the California Conservation Corps and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition. Salas says the program is funded by CalFire, and California Prisons system.

"At VTC we create an environment of mentoring, where they can be safe," Brant explained. "Too many guys get out of prison; reoffend because they get around old friends, old gang members whatever."

California governor Gavin Newsom cleared roadblocks to inmates becoming fire firefighters with the [signing of a bill](#) on an ashy bench surrounded by burned trees in September 2020.

"Inmates who have stood on the front lines, battling historic fires should not be denied the right to later become a professional firefighter," Newsom said.

The bill also gave courts the power to expunge inmate firefighters' criminal records, which had [often made it more difficult](#) for former inmates to get hired. The courts can wipe out camp prisoners guilty or nolo contendere pleas, and a plea of not guilty can be entered, or verdicts of guilt to be set aside.

One of the first former camp inmates to have his record expunged is Jose Santana, who trained at VTC, completed the program in the spring of 2021 and got hired soon after by the CalFire Tulare Station Unit.

Santana served three in years in prison for a crime he apologizes for repeatedly and to this day. The ex-convict says while drunk on Jamison whiskey, high on meth and not sleeping for five days, he smashed a liquor bottle into the head of his then girlfriend.

"It's my fault, I had no idea of what I'd done," Santana said.

Santana served three years of a five-year sentence. He described massive brawls in Wasco Prison and the Sierra Corrections Center with inmates beating each other with broom handles, kicking each other in the head. The guards' smoke canisters tossed to break up the melees, cast a gray haze.

"A war zone," said Santana. "I had to get out of there. I heard of Mountain Home, a fire camp for inmates. Maybe I could do it."

Santana, per his chiefs, excelled at Mountain Home, which helped propel him to the firefighter job he says makes his two sons proud. He heard one of his boys brag on a headset while playing with others in Fortnite.

"'Yeah, well my dad does a little something,' " Santana recounted his son saying. "'He fights fires!' " As fires roared through California in 2021, Santana racked up experience and overtime dollars.

"Last year I made I estimate \$86,000 to \$89,000 total with all the overtime," said Santana. "Big difference between that and making just a few bucks a day as an inmate."

On a rare down day during the scorching fire season, Santana passed out CalFire stickers at a parade in Tulare, dressed in navy-blue attire.

“It just felt so good, wearing that uniform, giving back to this great community,” Santana said. “I was smiling, thinking none of these people would ever know that I used to wear prison orange.”

Santana told CNN he will soon complete an Emergency Medical Technician program at Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria and will take on a greater leadership role with CalFire.

There is no VTC type facility or other training center for California’s female ex-convict firefighters, but Salas predicts the state agencies will establish an all-female version of the VTC sooner rather than later.

“Once we start figuring out how we are going to be able to expand,” said Salas. “Where our female barracks are going to be.”

John Reyna can’t predict if he will wind up full-time at barracks somewhere with CalFire. He’s applied to several CalFire jobs and his dream is in San Diego County.

Standing on the VTC grounds where he trained, sweated, marched and barked orders eventually as a company leader, he became reflective.

“I keep reminding myself, never forget what happened,” he said. “Never forget the people you hurt and their families. Start doing good for everybody around you and pay back. Pay back those families. That’s my way of giving back to that family that I hurt, is by doing good deeds.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Pandemic recovery slows to a crawl</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/investing/stocks-week-ahead/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/investing/stocks-week-ahead/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>New YorkCNN Business</b> — Investors are gearing up for a week of big ticket economic data, including a first look at economic growth between January and March and more inflation numbers.</p> <p>America’s economic activity, measured by gross domestic product, is forecast to have only grown at an annualized pace of 1% in the first quarter of the year, according to consensus expectations from Refinitiv. The <a href="#">Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s GDPNow model</a> forecasts a seasonally adjusted annualized growth rate of 1.3% as of mid-April.</p> <p>That would be a steep drop compared with the 6.9% growth pace in the final quarter of 2021 and would make it the worst three-month period since the pandemic recession in the second quarter of 2020.</p> <p>Economists had predicted that growth would eventually slow down from the pace seen during the great reopening. But even compared with pre-pandemic times, when the US economy grew steadily at a more moderate pace, 1% would be disappointing.</p> <p>So how did this happen?</p> <p>For one, companies rebuilt their inventories in the final three months of last year, which boosted economic activity. But this petered out in the first quarter of 2022, according to economists from Action Economics.</p> <p>The quarter also began with the Omicron wave of the coronavirus, surging infections and renewed restrictions aimed at containing the virus. While the effects were short-lived, the longer-term impact is only now becoming apparent.</p>

[Americans also had soaring prices to worry about](#), not to mention Russia's invasion of Ukraine that sent gas prices through the roof. In March, [retail sales data](#) from the Census Bureau showed that overall sales were only boosted by spending at gas stations, where sales jumped nearly 9%.

It's stressing an important point: So far, [US consumers are still spending freely](#), but much of that appears down to ubiquitously higher prices rather than increased consumption. Even though Americans still have pent-up savings from the lockdown days of the pandemic, [inflation levels not seen in 40 years](#) don't exactly make people go on extravagant shopping sprees. Eventually, this reality will catch up with US economic growth, which needs healthy consumer spending.

### **Forget the FAANGs. It's a stock picker's market now**

Investors who have been blindly buying Big Tech stocks got a rude awakening last week after Netflix imploded. But the good news from Tesla proves that some top momentum stocks can still thrive in this rocky market.

The latest results from Tesla ([TSLA](#)) and Netflix ([NFLX](#)) show how silly it is for investors to buy into themes and memes like the FAANGs, or MT. FAANG, if you want to add Microsoft and Tesla ([TSLA](#)) to the quintet of Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix ([NFLX](#)) and Google.

This is a [stock picker's market](#), my CNN Business colleague Paul R. La Monica reports.

"This environment will create an important backdrop for active investing," said Ken McAtamney, head of William Blair's global equity team, in a report.

One of the biggest mistakes that an investor can make is assuming that all stocks in a certain sector should rise and fall in tandem. That's an overly simplistic, binary view of the world.

Instead, investors need to do their homework and find companies with strong business models and healthy fundamentals.

"Not all businesses are created equally," said Paul Moroz, chief investment officer with Mawer Investment Management.

The Big Tech leaders of the Nasdaq are a broad and diverse group. That's why investors shouldn't assume that Netflix's problems are bad for the rest of the tech sector, or that Tesla's good news gives traders the all clear sign to buy every surging stock in sight.

"First quarter results so far highlight our view that investors need to be selective," Mark Haefele, chief investment officer at UBS Global Wealth Management, said in a report last week.

Coming up: How will the other Big Tech names fare? This week's earnings highlights include results from Apple, Amazon, Google, Facebook's Meta and Microsoft.

### **Up next**

**Monday:** Germany business climate; Earnings from PepsiCo and Whirlpool

**Tuesday:** US consumer confidence; Earnings from 3M, General Electric, JetBlue, UPS, Warner Bros. Discovery, Alphabet, General Motors, Mondelez, Microsoft and Visa

**Wednesday:** Earnings from Boeing, Harley-Davidson, Kraft Heinz, Spotify, Ford Motor, Mattel, Meta and PayPal

**Thursday:** Bank of Japan policy decision; US first quarter GDP; Earnings from Caterpillar, Altria, Domino's Pizza, Mastercard, Twitter, Amazon, Apple, Intel, Roku and Robinhood

	<b>Friday:</b> Europe first quarter GDP and inflation data; US personal income and spending data; PCE Price Index; Earnings from ExxonMobil and Chevron
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 CDC data: guns top killer of children in 2020</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/guns-killer-children-adolescents-2020-cdc-data-shows/story?id=84249874">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/guns-killer-children-adolescents-2020-cdc-data-shows/story?id=84249874</a>
GIST	<p>Firearms surpassed car accidents as the No. 1 killer among children and teens, according to startling new data released by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Friday.</p> <p>As firearm deaths for all Americans reached a new peak in 2020 -- 45,222 -- researchers said the numbers were particularly troubling among people under 19 years old.</p> <p>Gun deaths in that age group saw a 29.5% jump from 2019 to 2020, which was more than twice as high as the relative increase in firearm deaths seen in the general population, according to the CDC.</p> <p>For the last 21 years, gun deaths were second to motor vehicle crashes as the leading cause of death among children and adolescents, however, the gap between the two categories has been narrowing since 2016, the CDC said.</p> <p>The cause behind the surging gun deaths in America was largely due to firearm-related homicides, which saw a 33.4% increase in the crude rate from 2019 to 2020, the CDC said. Firearm-related suicides in the U.S. increased by 1.1% during that period, according to CDC data.</p> <p>In a letter to the editor published in <a href="#">the New England Journal of Medicine</a> Friday, CDC researchers couldn't provide a reason for the increase in gun deaths, but stated "the new data are consistent with other evidence that firearm violence has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic."</p> <p>"It cannot be assumed that firearm-related mortality will later revert to pre-pandemic levels," the researchers wrote.</p> <p>The researchers called for more investments in organizations and programs aimed at curbing community violence.</p> <p>"The increasing firearm-related mortality reflects a longer-term trend and shows that we continue to fail to protect our youth from a preventable cause of death shows that we continue to fail to protect our youth from a preventable cause of death," they wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 China promotes coal; boosts production</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-promotes-coal-setback-efforts-cut-emissions-84272155">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-promotes-coal-setback-efforts-cut-emissions-84272155</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China is promoting coal-fired power as the ruling Communist Party tries to revive a sluggish economy, prompting warnings Beijing is setting back efforts to cut climate-changing carbon emissions from the biggest global source.</p> <p>Official plans call for boosting coal production capacity by 300 million tons this year, according to news reports. That is equal to 7% of last year's output of 4.1 billion tons, which was an increase of 5.7% over 2020.</p> <p>China is one of the biggest investors in wind and solar, but jittery leaders called for more coal-fired power after economic growth plunged last year and shortages caused blackouts and factory shutdowns. Russia's attack on Ukraine added to anxiety that foreign oil and coal supplies might be disrupted.</p> <p>"This mentality of ensuring energy security has become dominant, trumping carbon neutrality," said Li Shuo, a senior global policy adviser for Greenpeace. "We are moving into a relatively unfavorable time period for climate action in China."</p>



Officials face political pressure to ensure stability as President Xi Jinping prepares to try to break with tradition and award himself a third five-year term as ruling party leader in the autumn.

Coal is important for “energy security,” Cabinet officials said at an April 20 meeting that approved plans to expand production capacity, according to Caixin, a business news magazine.

The ruling party also is building power plants to inject money into the economy and revive growth that sank to 4% over a year earlier in the final quarter of 2021, down from the full year's 8.1% expansion.

Governments have pledged to try to limit warming of the atmosphere to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above the level of pre-industrial times. Leaders say what they really want is a limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Scientists say even if the world hits the 2-degree goal in the 2015 Paris climate pact and the 2021 Glasgow follow-up agreement, that still will lead to higher seas, stronger storms, extinctions of plants and animals and more people dying from heat, smog and infectious diseases.

China is the top producer and consumer of coal. Global trends hinge on what Beijing does.

The Communist Party has rejected binding emissions commitments, citing its economic development needs. Beijing has avoided joining governments that promised to phase out use of coal-fired power.

In a 2020 speech to the United Nations, Xi said carbon emissions will peak by 2030, but he announced no target for the amount. Xi said China aims for carbon neutrality, or removing as much from the atmosphere by planting trees and other tactics as is emitted by industry and households, by 2060.

China accounts for 26.1% of global emissions, more than double the U.S. share of 12.8%, according to the World Resources Institute. Rhodium Group, a research firm, says China emits more than all developed economies combined.

Per person, China's 1.4 billion people on average emit the equivalent of 8.4 tons of carbon dioxide annually, according to WRI. That is less than half the U.S. average of 17.7 tons but more than the European Union's 7.5 tons.

China has abundant supplies of coal and produced more than 90% of the 4.4 billion tons it burned last year. More than half of its oil and gas is imported and leaders see that as a strategic risk.

China's goal of carbon neutrality by 2060 appears to be on track, but using more coal “could jeopardize this, or at least slow it down and make it more costly,” Clare Perry of the Environmental Investigations Agency said in an email.

Promoting coal will make emissions “much higher than they need to be” by the 2030 peak year, said Perry.

“This move runs entirely counter to the science,” she said.

Beijing has spent tens of billions of dollars on building solar and wind farms to reduce reliance on imported oil and gas and clean up its smog-choked cities. China accounted for about half of global investment in wind and solar in 2020.

Still, coal is expected to supply 60% of its power in the near future.

Beijing is cutting millions of jobs to shrink its bloated, state-owned coal mining industry, but output and consumption still are rising.

	<p>Authorities say they are shrinking carbon emissions per unit of economic output. The government reported a reduction of 3.8% last year, better than 2020's 1% but down from a 5.1% cut in 2017.</p> <p>Last year's total energy use increased 5.2% over 2020 after a revival of global demand for Chinese exports propelled a manufacturing boom, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.</p> <p>Stimulus spending also might raise carbon output if it pays for building more bridges, train stations and other public works. That would encourage carbon-intensive steel and cement production.</p> <p>China's coal-fired power plants operate at about half their capacity on average, but building more creates jobs and economic activity, said Greenpeace's Li. He said even if the power isn't needed now, local leaders face pressure to make them pay for themselves.</p> <p>"That locks China into a more high-carbon path," Li said. "It's very difficult to fix."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Average gas price drops \$.03 to \$4.24/gal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/average-us-gasoline-price-drops-cents-424-gallon-84281231">https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/average-us-gasoline-price-drops-cents-424-gallon-84281231</a>
GIST	<p>CAMARILLO, Calif. -- The national average retail price of regular-grade gasoline dropped 3 cents in the past two weeks to \$4.24 a gallon, the Lundberg Survey reported Sunday.</p> <p>That brings the total decline over six weeks to 19 cents a gallon, leaving the current price \$1.27 above its year-ago point, the survey said.</p> <p>Mid-grade gasoline averaged \$4.57 a gallon and premium averaged \$4.83.</p> <p>Nationwide, the highest average price for regular-grade gasoline in the April 22 survey was \$5.71 in the San Francisco Bay Area. The lowest average was \$3.70 in Tulsa, Oklahoma.</p> <p>Lundberg surveys a national panel of markets twice monthly.</p> <p>"Although crude oil prices rose in this period, the past few days saw them drop," industry analyst Trilby Lundberg said. "This with a big loss of business margin by retailers allowed the average price to decline. Unless oil prices fall further, additional drops in pump prices are likely to be small or none."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Rio's Carnival parade back after pandemic</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/23/rios-flamboyant-carnival-parade-is-back-after-the-/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/23/rios-flamboyant-carnival-parade-is-back-after-the-/</a>
GIST	<p>RIO DE JANEIRO — Colorful floats and flamboyant dancers are delighting tens of thousands jammed into Rio de Janeiro's iconic Sambadrome, putting on a delayed Carnival celebration after the pandemic halted the dazzling displays.</p> <p>Rio de Janeiro's top samba schools began strutting their stuff late Friday, which was the first evening of the two-night spectacle.</p> <p>Ketula Melo, 38, a muse in the Imperatriz Leopoldinense school dressed as the Iemanjá deity of Afro-Brazilian religions, was thrilled to be back at the Sambadrome.</p> <p>"These two years were horrible. Now we can be happy again," Melo said as she was about to enter Friday night wearing a black and white costume made of shells that barely covered her body.</p> <p>Rio's Sambadrome has been home to the parade since the 1980s, and is a symbol of Brazil's Carnival festivities. During the pandemic, it was a shelter for more than 400 homeless people and also served as a vaccination station.</p>

Brazil confirmed its first cases of the coronavirus in mid-March 2020, just after that year's Carnival festivities came to an end. The 2021 edition was swiftly canceled due to the rise of the delta variant. More than 663,000 people have died from COVID-19 in Brazil, the second highest of any country in the world, according to Our World in Data, an online research site.

Entire communities rally around the competing samba schools, whose shows are not only a source of pride but also employment since preparations require countless seamstresses, welders, costume designers and more. There are months of rehearsals for dancers and drummers, so participants can learn the tune and the lyrics for their school's song. The pandemic upended these samba schools' way of life for two years.

Sao Paulo also kicked off its Carnival parade Friday evening. Both cities' parades usually take place in February or March, but their mayors in January jointly announced they were postponing Carnival by two months due to concerns about the proliferation of the omicron variant.

The number of COVID-19 cases and deaths has plunged since then, and more than three-quarters of Brazilians are fully vaccinated, according to the country's health ministry. Local authorities have allowed soccer matches with full attendance since March.

Rio authorities said earlier this week those attending the parade would have to show proof of vaccination, but media reports showed that attendees had no trouble getting tickets or entering the Sambadrome without showing the required documents.

A seat in the bleachers cost about \$50, and the most expensive seats can cost more than \$1,260. Going out in one of the samba schools costs a lot for tourists, but it is often free for people who are involved with the parade all year round, like 66-year-old Juciara do Nascimento Santos. She was among the revelers starting this year's parade with the Imperatriz Leopoldinense samba school.

"We had to take care of ourselves during this time so we could be here today celebrating life," said Santos, who has paraded with Imperatriz Leopoldinense since 1984. This time she was in the section of the baianas, often reserved for the oldest women of each samba school. Many of these samba schools reported they lost many of their baianas to the virus.

For those unwilling to shell out for the price of admission, there were street parties across Rio - despite City Hall denying authorization for them to take place, citing insufficient time to prepare. Some organizers couldn't care less, arguing that celebrating Carnival wasn't contingent on authorities' consent, and parties hit the streets in force.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 West Virginia military vehicles to Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/23/west-virginia-to-send-military-vehicles-to-ukraine/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/23/west-virginia-to-send-military-vehicles-to-ukraine/</a>
GIST	<p>CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Gov. Jim Justice has announced that the West Virginia National Guard will send armored personnel carriers for Ukraine to use against Russian aggression.</p> <p>According to a news release, Justice says an “an undisclosed number” of M-113 armored personnel carriers to Ukraine following a request from the Department of Defense.</p> <p>The vehicles are used to move soldiers and equipment while providing protection from small arms fire.</p> <p>“By joining with other states in sending numerous of these armored vehicles to Ukraine, we hope and pray that this will give Ukrainian forces a major leg up in their defense of their home country,” Justice said in a statement.</p> <p>Earlier this year, Justice ordered the state to stop the purchase and sale of liquor produced in Russia. The Republican governor also asked the West Virginia Retailers Association to remove Russian liquor from their shelves.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Covid coordinator not worried BA.2 surge</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/24/new-wh-coordinator-not-worried-about-ba2-surge-say/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/24/new-wh-coordinator-not-worried-about-ba2-surge-say/</a>
GIST	<p>White House COVID-19 coordinator Ashish Jha said Sunday the U.S. can weather a surge in coronavirus infections fueled by the BA.2 variant, citing hospitalizations that remain at pandemic lows, though he acknowledged the frustration of parents who want to see a vaccine for their youngest children.</p> <p>Coronavirus cases have risen by 50% over the past two weeks and average about 46,000 per day across the country even as Americans shed masks on public transportation and indoor spaces and get on with their lives.</p> <p>Dr. Jha, who recently joined President Biden's virus team, acknowledged that Americans would have been told to hunker down if the same trends popped up last year. But he said hospitalizations are at their lowest point since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 — about 15,000 right now — so he is confident that pharmaceutical interventions are helping.</p> <p>“At this point, I remain confident we're going to get through this without disruption,” Dr. Jha told CNN's “State of the Union.”</p> <p>The latest surges “mean something different because people are vaccinated and boosted,” he said. “They mean something different because we have a lot more therapeutics available.”</p> <p>Roughly two-thirds of Americans are considered fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and nearly 100 million people — or 45% of the fully vaccinated — have opted for an initial booster shot.</p> <p>Regulators recently approved a second booster shot for Americans over 50 years old but children under age 5 remain left in the cold. Drugmakers Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna are testing shot regimens for the youngest Americans but some parents eyeing summer plans are losing patience with the process cases rise.</p> <p>“I am frustrated on their behalf,” Dr. Jha said.</p> <p>He said he expects drug companies to submit safety and efficacy data on vaccine dosing for kids under 5 in the coming weeks but was reluctant to give a specific time frame for authorization by the Food and Drug Administration.</p> <p>“My expectation is it's certainly going to happen in the next couple of months,” Dr. Jha said. “We really have to let them do their work. We want to be fast but we have to get it right.”</p> <p>Former Food and Drug Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said he expects the FDA to gather its advisory committee in early June to review one or both of the drugmakers' applications.</p> <p>FDA regulators are largely waiting on third-dose data to see if the childhood vaccines are effective enough against the virus to meet its benchmark of 50% efficacy against symptomatic infection.</p> <p>But Dr. Gottlieb told CBS' “Face the Nation” that there may be some value in authorizing two initial shots to get some kind of baseline immunity in children to stave off severe disease.</p> <p>The lag in immunizing young kids is notable because Americans who can benefit from vaccination are dropping most precautions designed to stop the spread of the virus. The White House and others are pivoting to an era in which individuals gauge their own risk against the virus.</p> <p>A federal judge in Florida nudged the administration to move a bit faster last week, striking down a mask mandate on public transportation even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention extended the expiration date from April 18 to May 3 while it studied the BA.2 variant and its impact.</p>

Dr. Jha said he thought the CDC's request for more time was reasonable but it will be up to the Department of Justice to appeal the decision. Some legal experts think Justice attorneys are playing for time and will try to get an appeals court to render the lower court's ruling moot after May 3, so the CDC can say it reserves its pandemic-fighting power without risking a precedent-setting decision on the transportation mandate in higher courts.

For now, passengers are left to make their own decisions. Dr. Gottlieb said there is pretty good air filtration while in flight, so he tends to wear a mask while boarding and getting off the plane as opposed to mid-flight.

"That's probably what I'm going to continue to do," he told CBS.

Beyond transportation, Philadelphia officials said Friday that face coverings to control the coronavirus are no longer required within indoor public spaces — four days after the city bucked national trends by reimposing its mask mandate.

The Board of Health voted to rescind the mandate after the city's Department of Health pointed to a 25% decrease in hospitalizations in recent days and a leveling off in cases.

Officials in Pennsylvania's largest city said they will rely on strong warnings about future surges, instead of using the tiered system that triggered the mandate, saying the threat of reimposing the mandate seemed to improve things before the actual rule returned.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Ukraine success no surprise to CA Guard</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/22/ukraines-battlefield-success-no-surprise-their-nat/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/apr/22/ukraines-battlefield-success-no-surprise-their-nat/</a>
GIST	<p>Leaders in Kyiv began reaching out to U.S. military officials for help soon after <a href="#">Russia</a> rolled into <a href="#">Ukraine</a> following a tense build-up along the border that lasted several months. One of the first calls went out to the <a href="#">California National Guard</a>.</p> <p>For nearly 30 years following the demise of the <a href="#">Soviet Union</a>, California's soldiers have had a close working relationship with <a href="#">Ukraine</a> as part of the <a href="#">National Guard</a>'s State Partnership Program. Maj. Gen. <a href="#">Dave Baldwin</a>, the state's senior officer, known as the adjutant general, has been friends with top Ukrainian military leaders for a decade, officials said.</p> <p>"When the invasion started, they started receiving phone calls: 'Hey, we're getting attacked,' followed by phone calls shortly later that said, 'Hey, here's what we need,'" recalled Army Gen. <a href="#">Daniel Hokanson</a>, the chief of the National Guard Bureau who also serves on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.</p> <p>The State Partnership Program links former Warsaw Pact countries with a U.S. state. <a href="#">Ukraine</a> drew the <a href="#">California National Guard</a> in the lottery. The relationship was intended to help their forces operate more easily alongside NATO and provide guidance about the proper role of a military in a democracy.</p> <p>"We initially worked on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to help them to respond to their communities [and] to help them take care of their countries," Gen. <a href="#">Hokanson</a> said recently at a session hosted by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank in Washington.</p> <p><a href="#">Ukraine</a> and the California <a href="#">Guard</a> have had about 1,000 different opportunities to work with each other over the past 27 years. "Over time, you continue to build on what you've learned," Gen. <a href="#">Hokanson</a> said.</p> <p>The California <a href="#">Guard</a> soldiers — many of them combat veterans with tours in Iraq and Afghanistan — trained the Ukrainians on a variety of subjects, ranging from the basics of small-unit tactics to conducting larger joint operations. They also helped <a href="#">Ukraine</a> develop a capable corps of non-commissioned officers — the sergeants in any military who are crucial for accomplishing a mission.</p>

“That makes all the difference in the world,” Gen. [Hokanson](#) said.

Many military analysts and strategic thinkers predicted the larger and more powerful Russian army would easily defeat the Ukrainians in direct combat, a misconception apparently shared by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his military aides. The California [Guard](#) troops who knew the improving quality of Ukrainian forces over the years were more confident, however. For them, the Ukrainian army’s success at blunting [Russia](#)’s attack for nearly two months did not come as a shock.

“They said, ‘Hey, we’re not surprised they’re doing that well. We’ve trained with them and we knew how good they were,’” Gen. [Hokanson](#) said. “You’re seeing that every single day right now.”

Maj. Gen. [Baldwin](#), the California adjutant general, told DOD News in a story last month on the California-[Ukraine](#) nexus that [his](#) long experience with Ukrainian forces led [him](#) to believe they were being badly “underestimated” by the West.

“We knew that they had radically improved their ability to do kind of Western-style military decision making,” [he](#) said. “I have been impressed, though, with their ability at the national level to work through some of the challenges we thought they still had in terms of logistics and command control.”

Ukraine’s air force, Gen. [Baldwin](#) added, was a particular bright spot.

“Our fighter pilots have been telling everyone for years that the Ukrainian Air Force is pretty good,” [he](#) said. “... “Well, the proof is in the pudding. Their Air Force is a lot better than everyone thought — except for the California Air [National Guard](#), who knew that these guys were pretty good.”

[Ukraine](#)’s ability to mount a nimble, adroit form of maneuver warfare stands in stark contrast to the rather stolid, heavy-handed tactics of [Russia](#) now on display, tactics that rely heavily on overwhelming artillery firepower to level cities and try to cow the opponent into submission.

“By working with [[Ukraine](#)] to establish leaders at the lowest level, really at the small-unit action level, they can seize the initiative, see an opportunity and take advantage of it,” Gen. [Hokanson](#) said. “We’re seeing that every day over there right now.”

The State Partnership Program was initially intended to guide the armies of satellite countries that had been under the thumb of the [Soviet Union](#) for decades. It has expanded dramatically since then with 93 countries linked to state [National Guard](#) contingents from all 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia.

[Ukraine](#)’s success on the battlefield against [Russia](#) might convince other countries to sign on with the State Partnership Program. The input from the combatant commanders — such as the heads of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; the Middle East-focused Central Command, or Southern Command for Latin America — will be crucial, [Gen Hokanson](#) said.

“We’ll maintain a very close conversation with them on where they see potential opportunities for future state partners,” [he](#) said.

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HEADLINE	04/24 NKorea 1 of 2 countries without vaccines
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/24/north-korea-covid-vaccines-covax/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/24/north-korea-covid-vaccines-covax/</a>
GIST	SEOUL — As mask mandates and social distancing requirements lift around the world, North Korea remains one of two countries that have not administered any coronavirus vaccines, with no sign of how it can ever begin to reopen despite a brewing humanitarian crisis for its people.



The vaccines that were allocated for North Korea through a [United Nations-backed global vaccination effort](#) are no longer available, officials said this month, after Pyongyang repeatedly rejected the initiative's offers of millions of doses.

North Korea, already one of the most closed societies in the world, [remains in a strict pandemic lockdown](#) and has shuttered its borders except to a minimal level of trade with China, with grave implications for the health and food security of its population.

The pandemic closure has [exacerbated the food crisis](#), said Tomás Ojea Quintana, the United Nations' special rapporteur on North Korean human rights. In a recent report, Quintana said the country's "covid restrictions, including border closures, appear to have prevented an outbreak inside the country, though likely at considerable cost to the wider health situation and further exacerbating economic deprivation."

No one is clear on the exact situation inside the country, however, because North Korea's retreat inward in the pandemic has restricted remaining channels of information — with diplomats, humanitarian aid groups and tourists no longer able to enter.

In light of the impending crisis, Quintana urged the international community to find some way to get the needed 60 million doses into the country to immunize its population of 25 million.

Last year, North Korea [rejected](#) nearly 3 million doses of China's Sinovac vaccine, saying shipments should go to other countries that need them more. North Korea also rejected 2 million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford University vaccine out of apparent concerns about potential side effects.

North Korean officials have privately indicated that they would prefer mRNA vaccines, such as Pfizer or Moderna, according to a [report](#) by a panel of experts convened by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. The panel concluded that North Korea probably would be interested in a high-volume offer of an mRNA vaccine.

With no vaccines at all, North Korea risks becoming the epicenter of new variants as a result of the population's low immunity to the virus, the panel found.

"It is inevitable that they will have to reopen the border, and when they do, the best way to protect their population — which is what they're already interested in — is to vaccinate the population as much as possible, which they are capable of doing," said Kee Park, a global health expert at Harvard Medical School who has worked on health-care projects in North Korea.

"They have to take a different strategy at this point. Zero covid strategy is starting to crumble," Park said. Officials at the North Korean Mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment on whether the country intends to accept vaccines or what it hopes to see before moving forward on an immunization program.

North Korea and Eritrea are now the only two countries in the world that have not administered vaccines.

The Gavi Alliance, part of the Covax initiative that aims to deliver vaccines to the world's most vulnerable people, said this month that it no longer has vaccine doses allocated for North Korea but that they could be made available again if the country changes its mind and starts an immunization program and meets technical requirements.

North Korea had completed some of the requirements for accepting Covax deliveries, but there were [ongoing negotiations](#) on whether North Korea is willing to indemnify the vaccine manufacturer against unexpected side effects.

Two years since North Korea's declaration of a "national emergency response" to the coronavirus, the lockdown shows no signs of letting up, with state media this week urging the public to "strengthen the

anti-epidemic work in preparation for the prolonged emergency.” A piece published in the state newspaper Rodong Sinmun warned against “sloppiness and idleness” in anti-epidemic work.

Still, at the year-end party plenum in December, North Korea announced it will shift from a “control-based anti-epidemic work” to an “advanced and people-oriented” measure that seeks to “strengthen the anti-epidemic stronghold while overcoming circumstances that ignore convenience for our people,” according to state media.

“Such a change in the basis of their anti-virus approach is a confession that there are limitations to fundamentally solving the problem with control and restriction alone, and that the long-term restrictions caused fatigue and discontent among the people,” said Kim Ho-hong, a researcher at Seoul-based Institute for National Security Strategy, in a report.

Ahn Kyung-su of the Seoul-based research center [dprkhealth.org](https://dprkhealth.org) said Pyongyang’s “people-oriented” slogan was probably an effort to alleviate pandemic fatigue, and he noted that the restrictions remain in place partly because of the virus resurgence in China, which is being closely tracked in state media.

“North Korea showed signs of reopening earlier this year in January, when trains briefly ran across the Chinese border, but the virus spike in mainland China led North Korea back into a strict isolation,” he said.

Anti-viral drugs could be a potential route for North Korea to reopen without needing to accept outside monitoring of its technical capabilities, the CSIS panel suggested. While the mRNA vaccine requires a sophisticated cold-chain and other logistics, anti-viral pills can be distributed more easily.

In light of what could possibly be an unfolding humanitarian crisis, the international community needs to find some way to persuade Pyongyang to reopen, U.N. special rapporteur Quintana asserted.

“A new way of thinking needs to take hold. This will require vision and initiative, driven by the needs of the North Korean people rather than any other agenda,” he said in his report.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Philadelphia lifts short-lived mask mandate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/us/philadelphia-mask-mandate.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/us/philadelphia-mask-mandate.html</a>
GIST	<p>Four days after Philadelphia became <a href="#">the first major American city to reinstate an indoor mask mandate</a> in response to rising coronavirus cases this spring, the city health department announced that the mandate would be lifted because of improving conditions.</p> <p>The city health commissioner, Dr. Cheryl Bettigole, said on Friday morning that recent days of declining case counts and hospitalizations in the city meant a mask requirement was no longer necessary. Pointing out that cases and hospitalizations were still rising in some surrounding counties and states, Dr. Bettigole argued that the improving situation in Philadelphia was proof that the mandate — even just <a href="#">the announcement of it on April 11</a>, a week before it went into effect — had worked.</p> <p>“It looks like what happened was that announcement itself was enough to head off that wave,” she said in a news conference, arguing that Philadelphians had immediately increased their vigilance in response to the announcement. “We consistently want to be the least restrictive necessary. And if that level of warning is enough to head off a wave, then we don’t need a mandate.”</p> <p>Dr. Bettigole said that city officials had not made the decision in response to public pressure or to a judge’s decision this week <a href="#">throwing out a federal mask mandate on public transportation</a>, but that they had simply been following the data all along.</p> <p>The resumption of the mandate had been automatically triggered when case numbers reached certain metrics detailed in the city’s Covid-19 response system, which was put in place in February to ensure data</p>

transparency behind the city's policy decisions. However, in Friday's news conference, Dr. Bettigole said that the system was being scrapped, and that warnings of risk seemed to be as effective as mandates.

"What we're trying to do is to move away from kind of these triggers," she said. "We want to make sure people have really solid information and understand what their risk is."

Philadelphia is not alone in trying to navigate [a confounding landscape of new variants and changing restrictions](#). Policies change at city limits and county lines; some airports mandate masks while the airplanes taking off from them no longer do, after the federal decision regarding face coverings on public transportation. That decision was issued on Monday, the same day that Philadelphia's mandate went into effect. It also applied to local transit systems, including the one in Philadelphia, where masks are no longer required. Thursday night's announcement about the lifting of the citywide mandate only added to the muddle.

Mayor Jim Kenney, who had defended the mask mandate in an [interview with The Washington Post](#) on Thursday, hours before the announcement that it was being lifted, said in a statement that "as cases level off and hospitalizations fall, we still strongly encourage Philadelphians and visitors to our city to wear masks."

The metrics under the city's now-defunct response system were much more sensitive to growth in case numbers than federal guidelines, which focus heavily on hospitalizations. Philadelphia officials said they designed them that way to forestall surges before they become perilously large. Over the course of the pandemic, more than 5,000 people in the city have died from Covid-19.

The indoor mask mandate had been triggered when the average daily number of newly reported cases increased by more than 50 percent over a 10-day period, surpassing 100 cases a day. The week between the announcement of the mandate and its enforcement, Covid-related hospitalizations in the city nearly doubled, peaking at 82.

On Friday, the number of new reported cases was about 190, lower than the average of new cases over the past few days, and the number of hospitalizations was 71.

The reactions to the initial announcement of the mandate ranged from anger among many of the city's business owners, some of whom sued the city in response, to praise from some public health experts around the country. Many of the city's residents accepted the return of mask-wearing, which had been required all of last winter, as a matter of course.

But the back and forth this week was testing their patience.

"You've got to be more consistent," said David Chisolm, 55, a barber in a part of Northeast Philadelphia with some of the highest Covid-19 death rates in the city. "People are gonna start saying, 'Y'all don't know what y'all are doing.'"

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 End of the all-male, all-white airline cockpit</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/business/pilots-diversity.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/business/pilots-diversity.html</a>
GIST	<p>It's been a half-century since airlines started hiring women and people of color to fly passenger planes, allowing a handful of pioneering pilots into the flight deck.</p> <p>In the decades since, commercial aviation has grown exponentially, democratizing travel and rewiring how Americans live, work and play. But one part of the industry has remained mostly the same. Piloting is stubbornly monolithic: About 95 percent of airline pilots in the U.S. today are male. Nearly as many are white.</p>

Zakiya Percy is one of a small and growing number of people trying to change that. Ms. Percy, 29, used to dream about flying, watching planes pass overhead when she was growing up in San Francisco.

“I told myself as a kid, you’re already a captain on a 777 flying international,” she said. “You just have to get there.”

Now, Ms. Percy, who is Black and a first-generation college graduate, expects to have her airline pilot’s license within a year, bringing her a step closer to that goal.

For many like Ms. Percy, piloting has long been or seemed out of reach. Few women and people of color aspire to fly planes because they rarely see themselves in today’s flight decks. The cost of training and the toll of discrimination can be discouraging, too. Now there’s urgency for the industry to act. Pilots are in short supply, and if airlines want to make the most of the thriving recovery from the pandemic, they will have to learn to foster lasting change.

“The pilot shortage for the industry is real,” Scott Kirby, the chief executive of United Airlines, told analysts and reporters on Thursday. “Most airlines are simply not going to be able to realize their capacity plans because there simply aren’t enough pilots, at least not for the next five-plus years.”

Airlines have started to do more to diversify. United recently launched a flight school with the aim of hiring thousands of pilots in the years ahead, at least half of them women or people of color. Other carriers have launched similar initiatives, too. The goal is to staff up to meet the industry’s aspirations.

But for the people carrying out those ambitions, becoming a pilot is less about meeting an existential need and more about fulfilling a personal dream.

“It’s unbelievable,” said Cetrena Simmons, 29, who grew up in Northern Illinois and recently began working as a pilot at Republic Airways, a regional airline. Ms. Simmons joined Republic in 2016 as a flight attendant after graduating college, but soon realized she wanted to be a pilot and trained at the airline’s flight school.

“Even though I fly every day, several times a day, the adrenaline’s still going every time I take off, every time I land,” she said. “Honestly, I don’t think it’ll ever change. I think it will always be exciting.”

#### **‘This is our club’**

As air travel became more popular in the 1970s and 1980s, airline advertisements almost exclusively depicted pilots as white men, with some exceptions in publications directed at Black consumers, said Alan Meyer, a history professor at Auburn University who is working on a book on the slow pace of racial integration in airline flight decks.

“It just continues to reinforce this image,” Dr. Meyer said. “This simultaneously plays into this often subconscious association between whiteness and maleness and technical competence.”

There were few Black pilots at the time, in part because airlines had only recently started hiring them. Marlon Green, a former Air Force pilot, became the first after winning a discrimination case before the Supreme Court in 1963, forcing Continental Air Lines to make him an offer. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned such discrimination outright, but insidious forms of prejudice have long remained. A decade later, Frontier Airlines hired [Emily Howell Warner](#), making her the first woman hired permanently to command the cockpit for a major American passenger airline.

Undisguised bigotry was common. Ms. Warner [once recalled](#) a co-pilot refusing to shake her hand and instructing her not to touch anything in the flight deck. David Harris, a trailblazing Black pilot hired by American Airlines at about the same time that Mr. Green got his job, recalled [having to bite his tongue](#) as a white co-pilot unleashed a “nasty” tirade days after the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Airlines felt little pressure, from consumers or anyone else, to make it a more hospitable work environment. And because piloting jobs were well-paid and people generally stayed in them for years, those early firsts didn't give way to broader change.

In 2015, when Ms. Percy arrived at Texas Southern University, a historically Black institution, the industry's exclusionary past didn't feel so far away. The school's pilot program was new and the university didn't own any planes, so she and other students would visit a nearby flight school to buy study materials, take written federal exams and receive training. Some of the white students and instructors there found ways of making Ms. Percy and her peers feel like outsiders, she said.

"We would get very rude comments like, 'Oh, wow, you guys are really flying down there?' or, 'Oh, you want to be a pilot? Why?'" she said. "All of these different comments that suggest 'this is our club, you can't really be a part of it.'"

### **No role models, no pilots**

Two years and about \$100,000. That's what it takes, in most cases, to gather the experience necessary to qualify to become a commercial airline pilot.

For Ms. Percy, that cost seemed prohibitive when she started to research flight training in earnest while in high school. She put her piloting dream on hold and, after graduating in 2011, she worked several jobs to save up to move to New York City, which she did two years later. There, she continued working to pay for her studies as a prospective psychology major at Long Island University.

But on trips home to San Francisco, Ms. Percy would arrive at the airport early to watch the gates change over and the planes and crews come and go. Unable to ignore her dream of becoming a pilot, she transferred to Texas Southern University in 2015, where she continued a grueling work schedule for about a year before deciding to cut back to focus fully on school.

"I said, 'What is the cheat code for universities?'" she said. "They're going to do everything they can as long as you positively contribute to their graduation and retention rate."

Then the university called off its partnership with the flight school, making it difficult for Ms. Percy to get the pilot training she needed in time to graduate, so she switched to a concentration in aviation management. It wasn't until she arrived at the Lt. Col. Luke Weathers Jr. Flight Academy, which was started by the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals, in May 2020 that she began flight training in earnest. Now, Ms. Percy expects to receive her airline pilot certification within a year, with plans to pursue a Ph.D after that.

While flight school can be expensive, the payoff is improving. There were an estimated 164,000 certified active airline pilots in the U.S. last year, slightly fewer than there were in 2019, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. Desperate airlines looking to staff up have started offering early-career pilots higher salaries, [bigger bonuses](#) and better schedules. A student can earn a six-figure salary within a decade of graduating, sometimes much sooner, and a senior pilot at a major airline can easily earn several hundred thousand dollars per year. But the price is still daunting, especially in an industry that seems to swing so easily between good times and bad.

Historically, the armed forces offered a less-expensive path into the field. But the military has long struggled with pilot diversity and shortages, too. Still, the Air Force has slowly improved diversity among active duty pilots: Today, about 8 percent of those pilots are women and about 13 percent are nonwhite. While nowhere near reflective of the American public, those figures are still better than the numbers for commercial airlines.

But the reason for racial inequality among pilots that is most commonly cited by experts and instructors is perhaps the most apparent: A lack of role models and exposure has played a central role in keeping many women and people of color out the field.

“Historically, we’ve seen that a lot of our aviators come out of the military or have family members that were pilots or are somehow involved in the industry,” said Allison McKay, the chief executive of Women in Aviation International. “If you don’t have either of those two things, you may not even have considered flying.”

The group is working to change that. Every year, the nonprofit hosts an annual “Girls in Aviation Day,” with events around the world connecting pilots and other aviation professionals with children and students. The Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals and groups representing other underrepresented groups, including Latinos or the L.G.B.T.Q. community, are making similar efforts to expose more people to the field.

That might have been helpful to Ricki Foster. Growing up in Jamaica, she had never seriously considered a career in aviation.

The first time she set foot on a plane was in 2001, when she was 18 and moving to the United States. After a decade working various jobs, an acquaintance encouraged her to become a flight attendant. Soon after starting that job, a pilot offered to take her on a “discovery flight,” a common way for people to get an introduction to the profession that typically includes riding in the cockpit of a smaller plane.

Ms. Foster, 38, was instantly hooked. But she had doubts. Could she really become a pilot with two children at home? Was it too late to switch careers? Could she afford the training? Then, she read an article about Carole Hopson, a Black woman and former journalist who held several corporate jobs before becoming a full-time United pilot in her 50s. Seeing someone who looked like her succeeding as a pilot encouraged Ms. Foster to pursue pilot training, which she is doing now as a member of the inaugural class at the United Aviate Academy in the Phoenix area.

“It’s nice to see yourself represented,” she said. “And I am looking forward to being that inspiration to a young Black girl: When somebody says, ‘you could be a pilot,’ and she’s like, ‘yes, I know, and I will.’”

#### **‘I would much rather do that’**

The Aviate Academy covers 28 acres and has two pools, two aircraft maintenance hangars, five dorms and 27 planes, with dozens more on order. It is owned by United, which bought the flight training school in 2020, and is part of the airline’s goal of hiring 5,000 pilots by 2030. Airline-owned schools are common abroad, but United’s is a first for a large U.S. airline. The carrier says it wants at least half of the new pilots to be women or people of color. Of the 121 students enrolled so far, about 78 percent are women or nonwhite, the airline said.

United’s school joins other efforts from major and regional carriers. In 2018, American launched a partnership with flight schools in Arizona, Florida and Texas, offering prospective pilots training, financing and mentoring, with an eye toward diversity. Alaska Airlines and its regional partner, Horizon Air, unveiled a similar program in March. Universities with flight training programs are working harder to recruit women and people of color, and many have launched scholarships for students from underrepresented communities.

Major U.S. airlines say they’re confident that they will be able to hire the pilots they need in the years ahead. But regional carriers that supply many of those airlines with flights and pilots are already struggling.

SkyWest, the largest regional airline, expects its aircraft utilization to be about 10 to 15 percent lower this year compared with last year because it doesn’t have enough pilots. The airline, which operates hundreds of daily flights for American, Delta Air Lines and United, had been working to address the shortage for years, but the pandemic exacerbated the shortfall, according to Robert Simmons, its chief financial officer.

After large scale buyouts and early retirements during the pandemic, large airlines have been picking up hundreds of pilots per month, often from regionals like SkyWest. Many of those being lured away are pilots with the most seniority and experience.



“The demand for our product has maybe never been higher,” Mr. Simmons said. “If we could magically create a thousand new captains out of thin air we’d be killing it.”

Republic Airways has also been dealing with shortages for years. Three years before United, Republic opened its own flight school, the Leadership in Flight Training Academy in Indianapolis.

Ms. Simmons, the flight attendant turned pilot, was one of a dozen people in the inaugural class. She had only flown twice before she applied to a wide variety of jobs, including at Republic.

“As soon as I got on the airplane for the first time as a flight attendant, I looked in the flight deck and I was like ‘wow, I would much rather do that,’” she said.

Ms. Simmons, who is Black, discovered that Republic was opening up the flight school, which can now train up to 300 students per year. She applied, was accepted and started training in 2018.

In February, Ms. Simmons piloted her first flight, from Indianapolis to Newark. She was anxious, but the captain of the flight let her take the lead.

“We’re lined up on the runway and I’m like ‘oh my gosh, this is not the simulator. There’s people back there,’” she recalled. “I’m so nervous, but it was a really good nervous. It was very, very awesome — a feeling I’ll definitely never forget.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Global vaccination far short of target goal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/health/covid-vaccines-world-africa.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/health/covid-vaccines-world-africa.html</a>
GIST	<p>In the middle of last year, the World Health Organization <a href="#">began</a> promoting an ambitious goal, one it said was essential for ending the pandemic: fully vaccinate 70 percent of the population in every country against <a href="#">Covid-19</a> by June 2022.</p> <p>Now, it is clear that the world will fall far short of that target by the deadline. And there is a growing sense of resignation among public health experts that high Covid vaccination coverage may never be achieved in most lower-income countries, as badly needed funding from the United States dries up and both governments and donors turn to other priorities.</p> <p>“The reality is that there is a loss of momentum,” said Dr. Isaac Adewole, a former health minister of Nigeria who now serves as a consultant for the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Only a few of the world’s <a href="#">82 poorest countries</a> — including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia and <a href="#">Nepal</a> — have reached the 70 percent vaccination threshold. Many are under 20 percent, according to data compiled from government sources by the <a href="#">Our World in Data</a> project at the University of Oxford.</p> <p>By comparison, about two-thirds of the world’s <a href="#">richest countries</a> have reached 70 percent. (The United States is at 66 percent.)</p> <p>The consequences of giving up on achieving high vaccination coverage worldwide could prove severe. Public health experts say that abandoning the global effort could lead to the emergence of dangerous new variants that would threaten the world’s precarious efforts to live with the virus.</p> <p>“This pandemic is not over yet — far from it — and it’s imperative that countries use the doses available to them to protect as much of their population as possible,” said Dr. Seth Berkley, chief executive of Gavi, the nonprofit that runs the global vaccine clearinghouse Covax.</p>

Countries in different parts of the world, including some in Eastern Europe and the Middle East, have seen their vaccination rates stagnate in recent months [at a third](#) or less of their populations. But Africa's vaccination rate remain the most dismal.

Fewer than 17 percent of Africans have received a primary Covid immunization. [Nearly half](#) of the vaccine doses delivered to the continent thus far have gone unused. Last month, the number of doses injected on the continent [fell by 35 percent](#) compared to February. W.H.O. officials attributed the drop to mass vaccination pushes being replaced by smaller-scale campaigns in several countries.

Some global health experts say the world missed a prime opportunity last year to provide vaccines to lower-income countries, when the public was more fearful of Covid and motivated to get vaccinated.

“There was a time people were very desperate to get vaccinated, but the vaccines were not there. And then they realized that without the vaccination, they didn't die,” said Dr. Adewole, who wants to see countries continue to pursue the 70 percent target.

What momentum remains in the global vaccination campaign has been hindered by a shortfall in funding for the equipment, transportation and personnel needed to get shots into arms.

In the United States, a key funder of the vaccination effort, lawmakers stripped \$5 billion meant for global pandemic aid from the coronavirus response package that is expected to come up for a vote in the next few weeks. Biden administration officials [have said](#) that without the funds, they will be unable to provide support for vaccine delivery to more than 20 under-vaccinated countries.

Some public health experts point to reasons for optimism that the global vaccination campaign still has steam. Despite the drop off from the February peak, the number of Covid vaccinations being administered each day in Africa is [still near a pandemic high](#). And Gavi earlier this month [drew a significant new round](#) of funding pledges, securing \$4.8 billion in commitments, although it fell short of its \$5.2 billion goal.

There is also hope that a [global Covid summit](#) the White House plans to co-host next month could be an opportunity to generate momentum and funding.

But the drop in public demand has led some health officials and experts to quietly, and in some cases outright, question whether the 70 percent vaccination target is feasible or even sensible.

Reported fatalities from Covid-19 remain comparatively low in sub-Saharan Africa, although [there is debate](#) about how much of this reflects poor data tracking. The perception, however, in many countries in the region is that the disease does not pose a serious threat, certainly not as much as other pervasive health problems that demand attention with scarce health care resources.

Many lower-income governments are turning their focus to their economies and other health issues like H.I.V., said Fifi Rahman, a civil society representative to a [W.H.O.-launched group](#) coordinating the global Covid response. “There's a sense of a lot of competing priorities, but that's a symptom of the momentum being gone. Because when the momentum was there, everyone was like, ‘Where are our vaccines?’”

In rural areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, where the reported Covid death rate is very low, there is a surge in measles cases threatening 20 million children. Yet the government says it cannot spare the resources to provide supplementary measles vaccinations this year, said Christopher Mambula, medical manager for Doctors Without Border in East Africa. In this kind of context, it makes little sense to continue to divert resources to widespread vaccination against Covid, he said.

As African governments have received more vaccines donated from wealthy countries and struggled to distribute even those supplies, their interest in ordering more doses has dropped.

The African Union still aims to vaccinate 70 percent of its population by the end of 2022. But with countries slow to use up donated vaccines, the bloc has not exercised its options to order more doses of the shots from Johnson & Johnson and Moderna.

The South African drugmaker Aspen Pharmacare earlier this year finalized a deal to bottle and market the Johnson & Johnson vaccine across Africa, a contract that was billed as an early step toward Africa's development of a robust vaccine production industry. Aspen geared up for production, but no buyers, including the African Union and Covax, have placed orders yet, said Stephen Saad, Aspen's chief executive.

The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine maker, stopped its production of Covid shots in December last year, when its stockpile grew to 200 million doses; Bharat Biotech, another Indian firm that was a major producer, also stopped making vaccines in the face of low demand. The companies say they have no further orders since their contracts with the Indian government ended in March.

After the W.H.O. began promoting the 70 percent vaccination goal, many lower-income governments adopted the target for their own populations. The Biden administration also endorsed it last September, setting a deadline of September 2022.

At the time, two doses of the vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna were understood to offer very strong protection against even mild disease, and there was still hope that achieving high levels of vaccination coverage would tame the virus. But the emergence of new variants and the spread of the virus in Africa changed the calculus.

The vaccine regimens that had been planned for the developing world offered little protection against infection with the Omicron variant. And as sub-Saharan African countries were shut out of vaccine distribution for much of last year, more and more Africans gained protection against the virus from natural infection, which studies have shown works as well as two mRNA doses in preventing infection. New data from the W.H.O. shows that at least two-thirds of Africans had been infected with the virus before the Omicron wave.

Given these factors, some public health experts in Africa say the broad 70 percent goal no longer makes sense. "There's very little value to it. In fact, we will gain much more by getting to more than 90 percent of people above the age of 50," said Shabir Madhi, a professor of vaccinology and the dean of the faculty of health sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. About two-thirds of South Africans above age 50 are currently fully vaccinated.

Dr. Madhi said that South Africa could close down mass vaccination sites and instead redouble its efforts to seek out the most vulnerable at church services and at government offices that pay out monthly pension benefits.

Katherine O'Brien, who directs the W.H.O.'s work on vaccines and immunizations, said the agency encourages countries to focus on its most vulnerable citizens rather than vaccinating "a random set of 70 percent" of their populations. The aspiration she said, has always been "100 percent of health workers, 100 percent of older adults, 100 percent of pregnant women, 100 percent of the people who fall into those highest risk groups."

Countries can of course make decisions about what health goal they wish to prioritize, Dr. O'Brien said, but finite resources should not be the obstacle to vaccinating against the coronavirus. "The world has enough resources to do this, if countries want to do it," she said. "And that should be really the North Star."

Some public health experts said that while the 70 percent vaccination threshold is clearly not achievable by its original deadline, it would be unwise and unethical to give up on that target over a longer time horizon. They expressed frustration about the growing gulf between wealthy countries vaccinating young

	<p>children and offering healthy adults fourth vaccine doses, and the regions where the majority of people still do not have one dose.</p> <p>“Why are we making it one target for high-income countries and one target for low income?” said Dr. Ayoade Alakija, a co-chair of the African Union’s vaccine delivery program.</p> <p>She said that even though many people in sub-Saharan Africa have been infected, there is still need for the additional protection that would come from a high level of vaccination coverage.</p> <p>Modest vaccination coverage, she said, “is not considered a good enough level of protection in England, it’s not a good enough level of protection in America. How is it OK not to be aiming for the very maximum, maximum we can? Aim for the sky and get to the top of the tree.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/23 Missiles hit Odesa residential area</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/world/europe/missile-strikes-odesa-ukraine.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/world/europe/missile-strikes-odesa-ukraine.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>At least eight people were killed when two cruise missiles struck a residential neighborhood on the outskirts of the Black Sea port city of Odesa on Saturday, Ukrainian officials said. Given the extent of the damage, officials said the number of victims was certain to climb.</p> <p>“There will be more,” Sergei Nazarov, an aide to Odesa’s mayor, said in a text message.</p> <p>He said the missiles struck a residential neighborhood in the Tairove district in the far west of the city. Photographs and video from the scene, including those posted to the city government’s Telegram channel, appeared to show extensive damage to a large housing complex, which was partially obscured by plumes of thick, black smoke.</p> <p>“All of this is while peaceful Odesa was preparing for Easter Sunday,” the mayor of Odesa, Gennady Trukhanov, said in a statement posted to the city’s Telegram channel. Orthodox Christians, who make up the majority in Ukraine, celebrate Easter this Sunday, and some in the Ukrainian military had expected, or hoped, that there might be some letup in the shelling.</p> <p>At least 18 were wounded in the strike, according to Andriy Yermak, the head of the presidential administration. He said a three-month-old baby was among the dead.</p> <p>The missile attack on Odesa comes a day after a Russian general outlined what appeared to be a broad new set of military objectives, including the seizure of all Ukrainian lands along the Black Sea, including Odesa.</p> <p>While taking Odesa had appeared to be a major goal of the Russian military at the outset of the war, efforts by Russian forces to march westward along the coastline have been hindered by fierce Ukrainian resistance and logistical issues. The sinking this month of the Moskva, a warship in Russia’s Black Sea fleet, seemed to put an end to speculation that Moscow could mount an amphibious assault on the city.</p> <p>In the past, Russian forces have launched rocket attacks against Odesa and the surrounding region by both air and sea, but those strikes have largely been aimed at military targets and strategic infrastructure. Until Saturday, Odesa had been largely spared the high-casualty attacks on civilians suffered by other Ukrainian cities.</p> <p>Saturday’s attack was carried out by a Russian Tu-95 strategic bomber flying over the Caspian Sea, according to a statement by Ukraine’s southern air defense forces. It said the bomber fired six cruise missiles, two of which were taken out by Ukraine’s missile defense system.</p> <p>“Unfortunately two missiles hit military targets and two hit residential homes,” the statement said, adding that Ukrainian forces also destroyed two Russian drones that were being used to help target the missiles.</p>

Russia's Defense Ministry later said that it had fired "high-precision long-range" missiles at a logistics terminal at a military airfield near Odesa, which it said was storing weapons provided by the United States and European countries.

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, described the missile strikes as a terrorist attack.

"The only aim of Russian missile strikes on Odesa is terror," Mr. Kuleba wrote on Twitter. "We need a wall between civilization and barbarians striking peaceful cities with missiles."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Bolstered Zelensky confident of victory</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/world/europe/zelensky-donbas-ukraine-russia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/world/europe/zelensky-donbas-ukraine-russia.html</a>
GIST	<p>President <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelensky</a>, bolstered by <a href="#">an influx of heavy weapons</a> from Western nations, expressed increasing confidence on Saturday that Ukraine was prepared to defeat Russian forces in what is expected to be <a href="#">a long and brutal battle</a> for control of the eastern industrial heartland.</p> <p>"We will be able to show the occupiers that the day when they will be forced to leave Ukraine is approaching," Mr. Zelensky said in an overnight address to the nation.</p> <p>The statement seemed to mark a decisive shift for Mr. Zelensky, who has spent months begging and shaming allies around the world to provide Ukraine with longer-range, heavy weapons to repel Russian forces as they assault the east in the latest offensive in the two-month-old war.</p> <p>At a news conference on Saturday, Mr. Zelensky said that the American secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, and the defense secretary, Lloyd J. Austin III, planned to visit Kyiv, the capital, on Sunday to discuss the "military assistance we need." They would be the highest-ranking American officials to visit since the invasion began. The Pentagon and the State Department declined to comment.</p> <p>World leaders "should not come to us with empty hands, not just presents and cakes," Mr. Zelensky said, but with "specific weapons."</p> <p>Military analysts said that the tanks, howitzers, deadly drones, armored vehicles and mountains of ammunition pouring into Ukraine from Western allies have been a significant factor in helping the country's troops fend off the larger and better-equipped Russian military.</p> <p>Despite increased fighting, Russian forces have made "no major gains" in the past 24 hours, as Ukrainian counterattacks continue to hinder their efforts, Britain's Ministry of Defense said on Saturday, in its <a href="#">latest assessment</a> of the war.</p> <p>The ministry said that, despite Russia's claim that it had conquered the heavily battered southern port of Mariupol, where the last remaining Ukrainian fighters have holed up in a steel plant with civilians, "heavy fighting" continued to frustrate Russian attempts to capture the city, slowing their progress into the Donbas region.</p> <p>The fighting in the eastern theater has increased the sense of urgency among Western allies to bolster Ukraine's defenses with more powerful arms. The terrain there is <a href="#">mostly open farmland</a>, which tends to favor tanks and other heavy weapons over the quick-hit, guerrilla-style tactics that the Ukrainians employed to such devastating effect in the country's north.</p> <p>Canada on Friday announced that it had delivered heavy artillery, including M777 howitzers and anti-armor ammunition, to Ukrainian forces in conjunction with the United States.</p>

The shipment came after President Biden announced [another \\$800 million in military aid](#) to Ukraine on Thursday, saying he wanted to send the “unmistakable message” to Russia’s president, Vladimir V. Putin, that he would “never succeed in dominating and occupying all of Ukraine.”

At Saturday’s news conference, Mr. Zelensky reiterated his willingness to meet directly with Mr. Putin, saying while “I don’t want” to meet with him, “I have to see the president” in order to end the war. He also appealed to the Russian people, saying, “Living in the Russian Federation is like virtual reality, like a video game. Come back to the world. It’s more beautiful and more truthful.”

While Russia has failed to make any significant territorial gains since launching its renewed assault in Donbas this week, the Ukrainian defense intelligence agency warned that Russian forces were trying to [identify the Ukrainian military’s most vulnerable points](#) in order to mount a larger offensive. It also said that some of the elite Russian troops who had been fighting in Mariupol had begun moving east to join the battle in Donbas.

The secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, Oleksiy Danilov, said Ukraine had managed to deliver weapons via helicopter under cover of darkness to the steel plant in Mariupol, The Associated Press reported.

The city has been the scene of growing desperation for the 100,000 people who are trapped there and struggling to survive under Russian occupation, said Iryna Vereshchuk, Ukraine’s deputy prime minister. On Saturday, an aide to the city’s mayor said that Russian forces had thwarted the latest attempt to evacuate civilians from Mariupol.

Most of the fighting over the past week has been for control of towns and villages directly on the front line, which stretches across 300 miles in Ukraine’s east and includes many communities already devastated by weeks of war.

In villages and towns largely in the country’s north that have been retaken by Ukrainian troops, officials have been working with international investigators to document violence against civilians.

Ukraine’s prosecutor general, Iryna Venediktova, said she was examining more than 8,000 reported atrocities, including summary executions, sexual violence and the forced deportation of children to Russia.

Moscow shifted its focus to Donbas after failing to seize Kyiv in the north, where Russian troops were hampered by logistical and tactical problems as well as sagging morale. Those issues are likely to persist in the battle for Donbas, according to independent analysts, who said Russia did not adequately rest, reinforce or resupply its troops before beginning its latest assault.

While Russia has been focused on seizing the east, at least eight people were killed and 18 were wounded on Saturday when two cruise missiles struck a residential neighborhood on the outskirts of the southern city of Odesa, Ukrainian officials said. Among the dead was a 3-month-old child, said Andriy Yermak, the head of the presidential administration.

Mr. Zelensky reacted angrily to the attack, denouncing Mr. Putin as “this bastard” and asking “what sort of God they believe in” that the Russians could kill a 3-month-old.

Photographs and video from the scene appeared to show extensive damage to a large housing complex, which was partly obscured by plumes of thick black smoke. Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said on Twitter that “terror” was the “only aim” of the strike on Odesa.

Three people were also killed and seven wounded in shelling on the northeastern city of Kharkiv on Saturday, the region’s governor said.

For its part, the Ukrainian military claimed to have blown up a Russian forward command post in the southern region of Kherson, which is largely under Russian control.



In his overnight address, Mr. Zelensky seized on a Russian general's statement on Friday that Moscow intended not only to dominate the east, but to roll through southern Ukraine all the way to Moldova, Ukraine's southwest neighbor.

"This only confirms what I have said many times," Mr. Zelensky said. "The Russian invasion of Ukraine was intended only as a beginning, then they want to capture other countries."

Military and political analysts have cast doubt on the claim by the Russian general, Rustam Minnekayev, suggesting that it might have been intended to confuse Ukraine and its supporters, and that it would be difficult for Russian forces, already engaged in heavy fighting in the east, to fight their way deeper into the south.

But the commander's hint that Russia had far broader ambitions rattled the region, [setting off alarms in Moldova](#), a former Soviet republic where Moscow-backed separatists have controlled a breakaway territory known as Transnistria since 1992.

Responding to General Minnekayev's claim that Russian speakers were being oppressed in Transnistria, the Moldovan government summoned the Russian ambassador to complain that such comments were "not only unacceptable, but also unfounded" and led to "increased tension."

Moldova is among the nations along Ukraine's border that have accepted the more than five million refugees who have fled since the war began on Feb. 24. But even as many have raced to leave Ukraine, more than one million Ukrainians have returned to the country, according to Ukraine's Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Some have risked the journey back home after Russian forces withdrew from areas around Kyiv, bringing a sense of stability to the area and allowing some business and foreign embassies to reopen there.

Poland, which has absorbed nearly three million Ukrainian refugees, more than any other country, said that [nearly 24,000](#) crossed back into Ukraine on Saturday alone. Lesia Vasylenko, a Ukrainian lawmaker, shared [a photograph on Twitter](#) of cars that she said were lined up and waiting to cross from Poland into Ukraine for Orthodox Christian Easter, which will be celebrated on Sunday.

"Ukrainians are coming home," she wrote. "Easter is a time to stand united and pray for Ukraine."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Climate protesters amass at White House</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/climate/climate-change-rally-white-house.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/climate/climate-change-rally-white-house.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Environmental activists, distraught by the government's slow pace of action on <a href="#">climate change</a>, amassed in front of the White House Saturday afternoon, calling on <a href="#">President Biden</a> and Congress to swiftly pass a climate bill that has been stalled in the Senate since December.</p> <p>The White House demonstration was one of dozens of "Fight for Our Future" rallies held across the country to press the government to cut the pollution that is dangerously heating the planet, capping a week of events timed to coincide with Earth Day.</p> <p>"We're here because in North Carolina we keep getting hit by hurricanes back to back, and we ain't got nothing fixed," said Willett Simpkins, 68, a retired nursing home maintenance director from Wallace, N.C. "And it's getting worse every year. It's time for them to stop talking about it and do something about it."</p> <p>The event, which drew several hundred people under the pale green trees in Lafayette Park, was emceed by Rev. Lennox Yearwood of the Hip Hop Caucus, a nonpartisan group that tries to engage young voters.</p>

Many in the crowd work for environmental organizations, but sprinkled among them were voters who wanted Mr. Biden to know that failure to enact climate legislation could cost him their vote.

Mr. Biden, who came into office promising [urgent action](#) on what he called the existential threat of climate change, has seen his ambitious plans pass the House but [get watered down](#) and stuck in the Senate because of unified opposition from Republicans as well as [Senator Joe Manchin III, Democrat of West Virginia](#), a powerful swing vote in an evenly divided chamber.

Spiking gas prices because of the war in Ukraine have led Mr. Biden to take steps that are anathema to climate activists. He [released a record amount](#) of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and pleaded with oil and gas companies to step up drilling. In keeping with an order from a federal judge, Mr. Biden said he would [open more public lands to drilling](#), despite a campaign promise to stop new oil and gas extraction.

Gracie Chaney, 27, a doctoral candidate in physics at the University of Maryland, said those actions felt like betrayal. “I’m pretty disappointed,” she said. “There were a lot of promises that he broke. It feels like we’re going back to the 19th century or something.”

The events come at a moment when scientists say the window is rapidly narrowing for nations to avoid tipping the planet into an irreversible future of more deadly storms, wildfires, floods, drought, food scarcity and mass migration.

Mr. Biden has pledged to cut greenhouse gases in half by 2050, a goal that is in line with what scientists say is needed from the United States to avert such catastrophes.

But if Democrats, who hold a razor-thin majority in Congress, do not enact major climate legislation within the next few months, many analysts say that window to meet that goal will slam shut. Republicans are favored to win control of at least one chamber of Congress in this fall’s midterm elections, and their steadfast opposition to climate action would likely doom the prospects for new legislation anytime soon.

Scientists have been declaring with increasing urgency that nations need to act now to avert a harrowing future. A [major scientific report](#) released earlier this month concluded that countries must immediately and drastically pivot away from the fossil fuels that have underpinned major economies for more than a century.

The Earth has warmed an average of 1.1 degrees Celsius (1.9 degrees Fahrenheit) since the Industrial Age largely because of human activity, namely the burning of oil, gas and coal. Scientists say that every fraction of a degree of heating translates into more frequent droughts, more violent storms, more species extinction — impacts that are already being felt in [every corner of the globe](#). Once the Earth passes a threshold of 1.5 degrees of warming (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), the likelihood of devastating heat waves, drought, wildfires and storms rises significantly, scientists say.

Brenda Mallory, the chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, reminded the crowd about steps the Biden administration has taken to cut pollution. But she emphasized the need to pass his stalled legislation, which would provide more than \$500 billion in tax credits designed to speed the country’s transition to wind and solar power as well as to electric cars.

“President Biden will use every lever, use every tool, and push every resource to tackle climate change,” she said. “But Congress must act, too.”

Mr. Simpkins has followed Mr. Biden’s actions, including a crackdown on planet-warming methane that leaks from oil and gas wells and a ban on hydrofluorocarbons, a greenhouse gas produced by refrigerator coolants.

	<p>“That stuff on the gas emissions, that was good,” he said. “The stuff on the Freon and air-conditioner stuff, that was good. But they need even more. Those trees that are getting burned down every year, they’re not getting replanted. The houses that are getting hit are not coming back.”</p> <p>Mr. Simpkins voted for Mr. Biden in 2020, but he said that if Mr. Biden fails to deliver strong climate laws, he will sit out the 2024 election. “I hate to say that, but I wouldn’t vote,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Nebraska fires: 1 dead, 15 firefighters hurt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/retired-fire-chief-killed-15-firefighters-injured-nebraska-wildfire/WZV77KLKJRBUNLQSS6BE7SUMDQ/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/trending/retired-fire-chief-killed-15-firefighters-injured-nebraska-wildfire/WZV77KLKJRBUNLQSS6BE7SUMDQ/</a>
GIST	<p>CAMBRIDGE, Neb. — A retired fire chief died, and at least 15 firefighters have been injured by wind-driven wildfires sweeping across portions of Nebraska.</p> <p>Alyssa Sanders, with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, confirmed to The Associated Press on Sunday that John P. Trumble, 66, was overcome by smoke and fire after his vehicle left the road Friday due to poor visibility.</p> <p>Trumble, a retired fire chief in Cambridge, Nebraska, was working with firefighters as a spotter in Red Willow County, where the blaze had scorched more than 78 square miles by Sunday afternoon. His body was found early Saturday, the AP reported.</p> <p>According to NEMA, wildfires have been reported in at least 12 of the state’s counties since Friday, The New York Times reported.</p> <p>Of the 15 known injured firefighters, five were working the fire that killed Trumble, but NEMA could not immediately provide status updates on any of the wounded. None were considered life-threatening, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>Corey Mead, a forecaster with the National Weather Service, told the Times late Saturday that a strong storm system brought “very strong winds” to Nebraska, and the same system drew dry air from the high plains of Colorado and New Mexico.</p> <p>“Grasses are just beginning to turn green. However, there’s a lot of tall grass that’s still dormant from the winter, so that tall grass is very dry and serves as fuel for fire ignition, whether it’s downed power lines due to the strong winds or even lightning associated with storms,” Mead said.</p> <p>According to NEMA, the Indiana National Guard deployed at least three helicopters and several trucks to help extinguish the blazes, and the Wildland Incident Response Team dispatched specialists to several, the Times reported.</p> <p>Farther southwest, the 21,000-acre Tunnel Fire near Flagstaff, Arizona, was 3% contained as of Saturday morning, according to the U.S. Forest Service. The cause of the fire, which started on April 17, remains under investigation, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>Meanwhile, 20 wildfires continued to burn across New Mexico on Sunday, including one blaze that has consumed 84 square miles.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Mental health crisis among teens</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/health/mental-health-crisis-teens.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/health/mental-health-crisis-teens.html</a>
GIST	<p>One evening last April, an anxious and free-spirited 13-year-old girl in suburban Minneapolis sprang furious from a chair in the living room and ran from the house — out a sliding door, across the patio, through the backyard and into the woods.</p>

Moments earlier, the girl's mother, Linda, had stolen a look at her daughter's smartphone. The teenager, incensed by the intrusion, had grabbed the phone and fled. (The adolescent is being identified by an initial, M, and the parents by first name only, to protect the family's privacy.)

Linda was alarmed by photos she had seen on the phone. Some showed blood on M's ankles from intentional self-harm. Others were close-ups of M's romantic obsession, the anime character Genocide Jack — a brunette girl with a long red tongue who, in a video series, kills high school classmates with scissors.

In the preceding two years, Linda had watched M spiral downward: severe depression, self-harm, a suicide attempt. Now, she followed M into the woods, frantic. "Please tell me where u r," she texted. "I'm not mad."

American adolescence is undergoing a drastic change. Three decades ago, the gravest public health threats to teenagers in the United States came from binge drinking, drunken driving, teenage pregnancy and smoking. These have since fallen sharply, replaced by a new public health concern: soaring rates of mental health disorders.

[In 2019, 13 percent of adolescents reported having a major depressive episode](#), a 60 percent increase from [2007](#). Emergency room visits by children and adolescents in that period also rose sharply for anxiety, mood disorders and self-harm. And for people ages 10 to 24, suicide rates, [stable from 2000 to 2007, leaped nearly 60 percent by 2018](#), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The decline in mental health among teenagers was intensified by the Covid pandemic but predated it, spanning racial and ethnic groups, urban and rural areas and the socioeconomic divide. In December, in a rare public advisory, the U.S. surgeon general [warned of a "devastating" mental health crisis](#) among adolescents. Numerous hospital and doctor groups have called it [a national emergency](#), citing rising levels of mental illness, a severe shortage of therapists and treatment options, and insufficient research to explain the trend.

"Young people are more educated; less likely to get pregnant, use drugs; less likely to die of accident or injury," said Candice Odgers, a psychologist at the University of California, Irvine. "By many markers, kids are doing fantastic and thriving. But there are these really important trends in anxiety, depression and suicide that stop us in our tracks."

"We need to figure it out," she said. "Because it's life or death for these kids."

The crisis [is often attributed to the rise of social media](#), but solid data on the issue is limited, the findings [are nuanced and often contradictory](#) and some adolescents appear to be more vulnerable than others to the effects of screen time. Federal research shows that teenagers as a group are also getting [less sleep](#) and [exercise](#) and spending less [in-person](#) time with friends — all [crucial](#) for healthy development — at a period in life when it is typical to test boundaries and explore one's identity. The combined result for some adolescents is a kind of cognitive implosion: anxiety, depression, compulsive behaviors, self-harm and even suicide.

This surge has raised vexing questions. Are these issues inherent to adolescence that merely went unrecognized before — or are they being overdiagnosed now? Historical comparisons are difficult, as some data around certain issues, like teen anxiety and depression, began to be collected relatively recently. But the rising rates of emergency-room visits for suicide and self-harm leave little doubt that the physical nature of the threat has changed significantly.

As M descended, Linda and her husband realized they were part of an unenviable club: bewildered parents of an adolescent in profound distress. Linda talked with parents of other struggling teenagers; not long before the night M fled into the forest, Linda was jolted by the news that a local girl had died by suicide.

“You have no control over what they’re thinking,” Linda said. “I just want to tell people what can happen.”

### **‘A typical outpatient’**

M is one of dozens of teenagers who spoke to The New York Times for a yearlong project exploring the changing nature of adolescence in the United States. The Times was given permission by M and the family to speak with M’s school counselor; M’s medical records were shared with The Times and, with the family’s permission, reviewed by outside experts not involved in M’s care.

“This is a typical outpatient,” said Emily Pluhar, a child and adolescent psychologist at Harvard University, describing M as “an internalizer.”

M, now 14, is tall, with red hair and blue eyes, and has a younger sister and older half brother. By turns shy and outspoken, M has thought extensively about pronouns and currently prefers “they.” At the beginning of seventh grade, M also asked to be called by the name of a popular Japanese anime character, whose first name starts with M. “I think we’re similar in that she’s, like, quiet and smart and plays electric bass, and I really like bass and guitars,” M said.

When M was 4, a psychologist the family consulted to assess M’s school readiness concluded that their “intellectual ability is in the very superior range,” according to the report. M enrolled in kindergarten as one of the younger class members.

At 10, M got a smartphone. Linda and her husband, Tony, both of whom had busy work schedules, worried that the device might lead to heavy screen time, but they felt it was necessary to stay in touch. At 11, M hit another adolescent milestone: puberty.

Over the last century, the age of puberty onset has dropped markedly for girls, to 12 years old today from 14 years old in 1990; the age of onset for boys has followed a similar path. Experts say this shift probably now plays a role in the adolescent mental health crisis, although it is just one of many factors that researchers are still working to understand.

When puberty hits, the brain becomes hypersensitive to social and hierarchical information, even as media flood it with opportunities to explore one’s identity and gauge self-worth. Laurence Steinberg, a psychologist at Temple University, said that ability to maturely grapple with the resulting questions — Who am I? Who are my friends? Where do I fit in? — typically lags behind.

The falling age of puberty, he said, has created a “widening gap” between incoming stimulation and what the young brain can process:

“They’re being exposed to this deluge at a much earlier age.”

M’s first hint of trouble came in sixth grade, with challenges focusing in class. The school called a meeting with M’s parents. One teacher suggested testing M for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, but Linda and Tony were skeptical. The number of A.D.H.D. diagnoses in the United States rose [39 percent](#) from [2003 to 2016](#), according to the C.D.C., and M’s parents, both scientists in biomedical fields, were concerned that consulting an A.D.H.D. specialist would tilt the scales toward that diagnosis.

Instead, Linda tried to help M stay organized with an app that parents and students used to track assignments, test scores and grades. M felt put under a microscope.

“She would say, ‘Can you bring me your iPad so we can check Schoology?’” M recalled about Linda. “I would literally have an anxiety attack because I was so scared.”

By the fall of 2019 — seventh grade — M was struggling socially, too. A close friend got popular, while M often came home from school and got into bed. “I felt like a plus one,” M said. “I just wanted to be unconscious.” Other times, M said, “I just sat in my room and cried.”

The behavior seemed alien to Tony, who had lived a different childhood. As an adolescent in Vermont in the 1980s, he fished and played outdoors. By 15, he had his first serious girlfriend; in 1990, the summer before their senior year, he got her pregnant. Their son was born that December, and Tony and the mother shared custody.

Times have changed. Federal research shows that 38 percent of high-school-age teenagers report having had sex at least once, compared with roughly 50 percent in 1990. The teen birthrate has plummeted.

So has [cigarette and alcohol use](#). In 2019, 4 percent of high school seniors reported having a cigarette in the last 30 days, down from [26.5 percent in 1997](#). [Alcohol use by high schoolers hit 30-year lows](#) at the same time. Use of OxyContin and other illicit drugs among high schoolers is [down sharply](#) over the last 20 years. Vaping of both nicotine and marijuana has risen in recent years, [although both dropped sharply during the pandemic](#).

Experts cite multiple factors: public awareness campaigns, antismoking laws, parental oversight and a changing social lifestyle that is no longer strictly in-person.

Dr. Nora Volkow, director for the National Institute on Drug Abuse, described drug and alcohol use as “very much of a group dynamic.” She added: “To the extent that kids are not in the same place, one would expect a decrease in the behavior.”

### **A virtual crush**

In the spring of 2020, M retreated further. Bewildered by online classes, M lied about participating, felt guilty and watched YouTube instead, devouring an anime series called “Danganronpa.” It is set in a high school where students learn from the evil headmaster, a bear, that the only way to graduate is to kill a peer.

M became enamored of one of the characters, Genocide Jack (sometimes known as Genocide Jill), who is [described on one fan site](#) as a witty “murderous fiend” who “kills handsome men” using scissors.

One night after dinner, M was upstairs and used scissors to cut both ankles. “I was mad at myself for not doing homework,” M said. “I was kind of thinking, ‘Oh, the pain feels good,’ like it was better than being stressed.” M couldn’t recall where the idea came from: “I wanted to hurt myself with anything.”

M’s parents noticed superficial scratches on M’s thighs that resembled cuts but did not raise the subject. Linda worried about the screen time but “it was pandemic,” she said.

When school ended for summer break, M’s mood improved. Over the summer, M discovered the mobile version of the “Danganronpa” video game and how to override the parental screen limits. M played all day.

“I was in front of my screen staring at Jack,” M said. “Then I was playing ‘Trigger Happy Havoc,’ and I was, like, more in love.”

“I was kind of just lonely,” M said. M fantasized about the future with Jack: “I’d want her to almost kill me but not, and then we could spend the rest of our lives together.”

An obsession with a virtual character is not uncommon, experts said. “This is a kid who is a bit lonely, a bit caught up in these narratives,” said Nick Allen, a psychologist at the University of Oregon. “There’s nothing new in coming up with stuff that freaks out their parents.”

Nonetheless, he added, “extremely powerful” online experiences like these can encourage users to think, “That is going to be my identity, my sense of the future, my sense of where I belong socially,” at a time when one’s identity is a work in progress.



Dr. Pluhar of Harvard noted that “the challenge and the progress” of modern adolescence “is there are so many types of identity” — more choices and possibilities, which in turn could be overwhelming. Among the factors shaping mental health, Dr. Pluhar said, is the mind’s churning and obsessing: “Rumination is a big piece of it.”

M had a name for the main source of their mental health challenges: “Loneliness.”

### **Elaniv**

Health experts note that, for all its weight, the adolescent crisis at least is unfolding in a more accepting environment. Mental health issues have shed much of the stigma they carried three decades ago, and parents and adolescents alike are more at ease when discussing the subject among themselves and seeking help.

Indeed, Linda had begun having conversations with other parents who wondered whether the challenges their adolescents were facing represented typical moody teen behavior or something pathological. A colleague told Linda about her daughter’s eating disorder. A mother named Sarah confided that her middle-school-age daughter was in therapy for anxiety and depression. “I told her, ‘I understand where you’re at way better than you think,’” Sarah recalled.

In a nearby suburb, the parents of Elaniv Burnett were struggling to understand their daughter’s desperation. As a young child, Elaniv had been joyful, an eager student and graceful gymnast, her father, Dr. Tatnai Burnett, a gynecological surgeon at the Mayo Clinic, recalled: “The kind of kid where you go, ‘Huh, we should have more kids.’”

But in 2014, when Elaniv was 9, her parents’ marriage began to fracture, and Elaniv injured her ankle; she developed chronic pain, which sidelined her from gymnastics, and she went through a dark period. Then, in 2016, Dr. Burnett, who is Black, was held at gunpoint at home by the police, in full view of the family, after officers responded to a call of a possible intruder.

[Recent research](#) has found that wealth, education and opportunity do not shield Black families from mental health issues to the same degree they do for white families. From 1991 to 2017, suicide attempts by Black adolescents [rose 73 percent](#), compared with an [18 percent rise among white adolescents](#). (The overall suicide rate remains higher among white adolescents.) The suicide rate leaped particularly for Black girls, up [6.6 percent per year on average](#) from 2003 to 2017, [new research shows](#).

In the fall of 2019, Elaniv was diagnosed with major depressive disorder. In a poem in her journal, she wrote: “Thoughts like racecars zoom constant in my head/ Self-hate and worthlessness/ Perpetual, they speed ahead.”

Elaniv began therapy, took medications and enrolled in an outdoor inpatient program in Utah. “We worked on ourselves, worked on our parenting, we changed so many things to try to help meet Elaniv where she was,” Dr. Burnett said. “We controlled electronics, monitored friendships.”

Elaniv’s mother, Tania Gainza, a clinical social worker, saw a generational trend. She had counseled an adolescent for years who was terrified of not meeting expectations. She heard about a local boy who killed himself seemingly without warning.

“There’s something different about this era or generation that makes them much more susceptible or vulnerable,” Ms. Gainza said. “There’s not that community, I guess.”

A rise in loneliness is a key factor, experts said. Recent studies have shown that [teenagers in the United States](#) and [worldwide increasingly report feeling lonely](#), even in a period when [their internet use has exploded](#).

“They’re hanging out with friends, but no friends are there,” said Bonnie Nagel, a psychologist at the Oregon Health & Science University. “It’s not the same social connectedness we need and not the kind that prevents one from feeling lonely.”

Often, she said, online social connections amount to seeing “pictures of people hanging out, flaunting it, as if to say, ‘Hey, I’m very socially connected,’ and ‘Hey, look at you by yourself.’”

### **The pandemic factor**

One day in the autumn of 2020, with the pandemic in full swing and eighth grade having gone fully remote, Linda found M sobbing in bed. M confessed to wanting to die.

Linda found an online therapist. After several sessions, “the therapist broke confidentiality,” Linda said. “She said, ‘You need to know about the knife.’”

In M’s night stand, Tony found a pocketknife and a box knife with a cat’s paw image on the handle that M had surreptitiously bought on Amazon and was using to self-harm. One night, M went further, tightening a red hair tie around their neck. “I was trying to see how far I could take it,” M said.

The following February, M entered full-day group therapy. A psychiatrist at the clinic notified the family that M had admitted to being unable to stop cutting, medical records show. Linda “de-knived the house,” she said, and hid all the pills. Then M engaged in a different kind of self-harm: hitting their head with an eight-pound workout barbell.

Linda recalled feeling stunned: “Oh, now I have to get rid of the blunt objects, too.”

M was discharged with a diagnosis of depression and a prescription for antidepressants. From 2015 to 2019, prescriptions for antidepressants rose 38 percent for teenagers compared with 15 percent for adults, according to Express Scripts, a major mail-order pharmacy.

Subsequently, M also received a diagnosis of attention deficit disorder, not A.D.H.D., and given a prescription for methylphenidate, the generic name for medications including Ritalin and Concerta. “I’m still not sure I believe it,” Linda said.

M’s middle school has a trained mental health counselor. In March 2021, M visited him for the first time. During that visit, on a scale of 0 to 10, M ranked hopelessness and anxiety at 9, expressing terror at returning to school, a fear of falling behind and a wish to die.

But M’s mood improved; at a meeting a month later, M ranked hopelessness and sadness at 5 and anxiousness at 2. M felt therapy was crucial but wasn’t sure the medications helped; the school counselor credited M’s improvement to family support and getting back to school. He cautioned the parents, though, that the pendulum could swing back.

### **Into the forest**

Around that time, Linda heard through the grapevine that a girl named Elaniv Burnett had died following an overdose. “I’m sorry, I can’t take it anymore,” Elaniv wrote in a note. Her mother rushed her, still conscious, to the hospital, where Elaniv expressed regret at the overdose and described her terror. [She died four days later, at age 15.](#)

The news was still on Linda’s mind a few weeks later when M fled into the forest.

M’s family had recently returned from visiting both sets of grandparents. One set criticized M’s pronouns, the other M’s heavy screen use. Linda said she felt judged. She stole a look at M’s phone and saw the troubling photos.

“Let’s go for a walk,” she said to M and went upstairs briefly. When she returned, M had vanished, so she followed them into the woods, texting as she frantically looked for flashes of M’s white dress.

	<p>Finally M texted back: “I don’t want to talk to you.”</p> <p>Linda returned home, and Tony went out. He found M along a commonly used trail. They walked, mostly in silence. “Then they were ready to come home,” he recalled.</p> <p>The school year ended, and M improved, the anxiety ebbing. M took joy spending time with a friend, in person, walking home, strolling the forest.</p> <p>But a few weeks later, a hurtful text from the friend plunged M into despair again, “like I was back to having no friends.”</p> <p>M used an exfoliating blade to cut both ankles. “I don’t know how to stop it,” M said. “I can bet \$20 that I’ll be in the hospital next year.”</p> <p>When Linda saw the cuts, she confronted M, who handed over the blade. M let Linda examine the wounds.</p> <p>“I think that’s good,” Linda said. “They let me look.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 War in Ukraine unleashes new word</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/magazine/ruscism-ukraine-russia-war.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/magazine/ruscism-ukraine-russia-war.html</a>
GIST	<p>The City Council of Mariupol, Ukraine, was trying to make a point about mass death. Their city had been hit hardest by the Russian invasion, and thousands of corpses lay amid the rubble after weeks of urban warfare. After the revelation of <a href="#">Russian atrocities in Bucha</a> and other cities in northern Ukraine, the elected representatives of the port city wished to remind the world that the <a href="#">scale of killing in the south</a> was still higher. In dry and sober language, they described the fates of Mariupol residents. Occasionally, though, emotion slipped through: In passing, the council members referred to the Russian perpetrators by a term of condemnation that every Ukrainian knows, though it is not yet in the dictionaries and cannot (yet) be said in English: “рашизм.”</p> <p>As Russian troops withdrew from the Kyiv region, and photographs of the corpses of murdered civilians appeared in media, Ukrainians expressed their horror and condemnation with this same word. As I read about Irpin, about Bucha, about <a href="#">Trostyanets</a>, of the bodies crushed by tanks, of the bicyclists shot on the street, of the desecrated corpses, there it was, “рашизм,” again and again, in comments sections, in social media, even in the official pronouncements of the Ukrainian state. As Russia renews its attempt to destroy the Ukrainian state with its Easter offensive in the Donbas, Ukrainians will keep using this new word.</p> <p>Grasping its meaning requires crossing differences in alphabet and pronunciation, thinking our way into the experience of a bilingual society at war with a fascist empire. “Рашизм” sounds like “fascism,” but with an “r” sound instead of an “f” at the beginning; it means, roughly, “Russian fascism.” The aggressor in this war keeps trying to push back toward a past as it never happened, toward nonsensical and necrophiliac accounts of history. Russia must conquer Ukraine, Vladimir Putin says, because of a baptism a thousand years ago, or because of bloodshed during World War II. But Russian myths of empire cannot contain the imagination of the Ukrainian victims of a new war.</p> <p>National identity is about living people, and the values and the futures they imagine and choose. A nation exists insofar as it makes new things, and a national language lives by making new words.</p> <p>The new word “рашизм” is a useful conceptualization of Putin’s worldview. Far more than Western analysts, Ukrainians have noticed the Russian tilt toward fascism in the last decade. Undistracted by <a href="#">Putin’s operational deployment of genocide talk</a>, they have seen fascist practices in Russia: the cults of the leader and of the dead, the corporatist state, the mythical past, the censorship, the conspiracy theories, the centralized propaganda and now the war of destruction. Even as we rightly debate how applicable the term is to</p>

Western figures and parties, we have tended to overlook the central example of fascism's revival, which is the Putin regime in the Russian Federation.

The origins of the word “рашизм” give us a sense of how Ukrainians differ from both Russians and Americans. A bilingual nation like Ukraine is not just a collection of bilingual individuals; it is an unending set of encounters in which people habitually adjust the language they use to other people and new settings, manipulating language in ways that are foreign to monolingual nations. I have gone on Ukrainian television and radio, taken questions in Russian and answered them in Ukrainian, without anyone for a moment finding that switch worthy of mention. Once, while speaking Ukrainian on television, I stopped for a moment to quote a few words of poetry in Russian, a switch that was an effort for me. But Ukrainians change languages effortlessly — not just as situations change, but also to *make* situations change, sometimes in the middle of a sentence, or even in the middle of a word.

“Рашизм” is a word built up from the inside, from several languages, as a complex of puns and references that reveal a bilingual society thinking out its predicament and communicating to itself. Its emergence demonstrates how a code-switching people can enrich language while making a horrific war more intelligible to themselves. Putin's ethnic imperialism insists that Ukrainians must be Russians because they speak Russian. They do — and they speak Ukrainian. But Ukrainian identity has as much to do with an ability to live between languages than it does with the use of any one of them.

**Ukrainian is written** in Cyrillic, and so pausing upon “рашизм” in this, its original form, will help with the mental calisthenics required to apprehend things the way the Ukrainians do. Seeing those six characters, you might be tempted to begin by making them Latin ones. But languages work together in a complex way, especially in the minds of people who speak more than one of them natively. As Rimbaud and the Hasidim (who came from Ukraine) knew, each letter has magic. We have to go slowly.

Those six Cyrillic letters contain references to Italian, Russian and English, all of which a mechanical, letter-by-letter transliteration would block. The best (if imperfect) way I have found to render “рашизм” from Ukrainian into English is “ruscism” — though not what the standard protocol of transliteration would suggest, this gestures at both the word's origins and its meaning. When we see “ruscism” we might guess this word has to do with Russia (“rus”), with politics (“ism”) and with the extreme right (“ascism”) — as, indeed, it does. A simple way to think about it is as a conglomerate of the “r” from “Russia” and the “ascism” from “fascism”: Russian fascism. This is barely the beginning of the story, but it starts us down the path toward the linguistic playfulness that makes the word possible, and toward the accumulation of meaning drawn from each sound.

I have had to spell “рашизм” as “ruscism” in English because we need “rus,” with a “u,” to see the reference to Russia. In losing the original Ukrainian “a,” though, we weaken a multilayered reference — because the “a” in “рашизм,” conveniently, allows the Ukrainian word to associate Russia and fascism in a way English cannot.

But wait: How can the “ra” (written “pa” in Cyrillic) suggest Russia in Ukrainian? You might guess that “Russia” in Ukrainian also has an “a” in the first syllable, but it does not. It's spelled with an “o”: Росія. You might remember that Ukrainians also know Russian, and guess that perhaps the word for “Russia” in *Russian* is spelled with an “a.” It's not: In Russian, too, the word has an “o” as its first vowel. But the guess puts us on the right track. We are about to see that Ukrainians can play with Russian in ways that Russians cannot — that a Ukrainian word can contain within it a reference to Russia that Russians themselves would never catch.

If you don't know either language, you might think that Russian and Ukrainian are very similar. They are pretty close — much as, say, Spanish and Italian are. If you know one, you have a tremendous advantage in learning the other. But you do still have to learn it. Russian grammar is similar to Ukrainian — perhaps a tad closer than, say, Ukrainian and Polish — but the semantics are not that close. From a Russian perspective, the false friends are legion. There is an elegant four-syllable Ukrainian word that simply means “soon” or “without delay,” but to a Russian it sounds like “not behind the bar.” The Ukrainian word

for “cat” sounds like the Russian for “whale,” while the Ukrainian for “female cats” sounds like Russian for “intestines.”

Russians do not understand Ukrainian, because they have not learned it. Ukrainians *do* understand Russian, because they *have* learned it. This fact has battlefield implications. Ukrainian soldiers often speak Russian, though they are instructed to use Ukrainian to spot infiltrators and spies. This is a drastic example of a general practice of code-switching. President Volodymyr Zelensky generally used Russian as a comedian and almost always uses Ukrainian as a politician — except for when he might switch, midspeech, to using Russian to address Russians, in the full knowledge that Ukrainians will follow along.

To switch back and forth between kindred languages requires a lively knowledge of the differences between them. One difference between Ukrainian and Russian has to do with that “ah” sound, which appears more often in Russian. In both languages, the vowel “a” consistently generates this sound. In Russian, though, a written “o” can do it, too. A salient example is the Russian word for “liberation” — “освобождение.” This is transliterated the way it looks, as “osvobozhdenie,” but sounds more like “asvobazhdenie,” with each “a” pronounced as an “ah.” To a Ukrainian ear, this is a very Russian word. The Ukrainian counterpart — визволення, *vyzvolennia* — sounds completely different (though it is almost identical to the Polish *wyzwolenie*).

The Russian освобождение is also laden with decades of Soviet usage, since it was applied relentlessly to describe every action of the Red Army, including ones where the people in question did not believe that they were being “liberated,” as in Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. This is the word now used by Russians to describe their invasion of Ukraine, and it carries with it decades of mendacious use. To Ukrainians it can sound both absurd and sinister; when Russians use it earnestly, Ukrainians might consider it a sign of “zombification,” зомбування, a word they use rather a lot. One Ukrainian explanation for the use of the letter Z by official Russia as the symbol of the invasion is that “the other half of the swastika was stolen in the warehouse,” a joke about the logistics of the Russian Army — but personally, the Z makes me think of “zombie.”

At present, Ukrainian media often features a special kind of mockery in quotations of Russians speaking Russian — a kind of humor that is only possible from inside a linguistic community. Ukrainians are perfectly capable of writing Russian correctly, but during the war some internet commentators have spelled the occasional Russian word using the Ukrainian writing system, leaving it looking unmoored and pitiable. Writing in Ukrainian, you might spell “освобождение” as “асвобаждение,” the way it is pronounced — a bit of lexicographic alchemy that makes it (and, by extension, Russians) look silly, and mocks the political concepts being used to justify a war. In a larger sense, such efforts are a means of displacing Russia from its central position in regional culture.

Indeed, one relevant case of this o/a shift is the name of Russia itself. The Russian word for “Russia” is “Россия,” but that “o” is pronounced as an “a,” something like “Rahssiya.” You can now see where this is going. The “rah” sound at the beginning of our new Ukrainian word, “рашизм,” doesn’t just signal “Russian” — it suggests the word “Russia” *as it is pronounced by people speaking Russian*. It is the peculiar way Russian speakers name their own country that seals a link between “Russia” and “fascism.”

**In Russian** you need to know when an “o” becomes an “a,” but once you know, the sound is consistent. Ukrainians play with English as well, which in this respect is trickier. In English it is all but impossible to predict how a given vowel will be pronounced; the letter on the page has almost nothing to do with the sound you are supposed to make. (If you don’t believe me, go back and sound out the vowels in any sentence of this essay.) English vowel sounds are also different — broader, lazier and more numerous — than those in Ukrainian and Russian. English speakers have about as many ways of pronouncing “a” as there are vowels in those entire languages.

When Americans say “Russia,” the first and second syllable rhyme. This is baffling, since the first vowel is a “u” and the second is an “ia.” Neither is pronounced in a way that corresponds to how speakers of Slavic languages — and indeed most other languages — would understand the pronunciation of “ia” or “u,” or for that matter *any* vowel. For both, Americans tend to make an “uh” sound, known as a schwa; we

say “Ruhshuh.” This “uh” sound does not exist in Ukrainian or Russian, whose speakers sometimes have a difficult time knowing where it belongs and how to pronounce it.

It matters how we spell and say “Russia” in English because the Ukrainian word “рашизм” strips the English for parts. Ukrainians hear us say “Russia” a good deal. Now, they tend not to take too seriously what we say about Russia, and generally they are right — and so when they take “Russia” and make it “Раша,” borrowing the way we might say it, they mean a Russia that is not to be taken so seriously, not to be accepted on its own terms, an object of contempt. This and the more dismissive “Рашка” (the “k” makes it diminutive) are in the spoken language rather than written. And the way the word is spoken matters, too: the Ukrainians can’t quite do the schwa “uh” sound, so their “Раша,” although it is meant to mimic English, actually sounds like “Rahsha.”

Here we begin to feel the density of the parts and references packed into “рашизм.” It is not just the “r” sound at the beginning that can stand for Russia. Nor is it even just the “ra,” as a reference to how Russian speakers pronounce the Russian word for “Russia.” The first three letters, “раш,” also make reference to how *English* speakers pronounce Russia. Although the reference to English is inexact, the “rahsh” sound that comes from it turns out to be very productive, because it makes the combination with “fascism” work smoothly. Three-quarters of the letters in a Ukrainian neologism from English (“Раша”) are brought together with five-sixths of the letters from an adopted Italian word (“фашизм,” fascism) to generate the new word “рашизм” — a dense and effective conglomerate.

When we say “Russia,” the double “s” is pronounced “sh.” In the middle of “fascism” we find the same sound, “sh” — though this time it is generated by “sc,” which English borrows from the original Italian “fascismo.” We can render that sound with “sh” or, in these two words, “ss” and “sc,” but the clarifyingly simple Ukrainian orthography picks up that sound, however it is spelled in whatever language, and renders it as “ш.” So “раша” + “фашизм” = “рашизм,” also thanks to that middle sound. The “sh” sound in the middle, the “ш,” refers to both Russia and to fascism, *but only because Ukrainians are playing with English*. In neither Russian nor Ukrainian does the word for “Russian” have a “sh” sound.

“Рашизм” relies on English to work, but it is not easy for English to reclaim. When “Russia” becomes “Раша,” the vowels firm up and become more honest; they no longer quite conform to English. The same is even true for the “ism,” which in Ukrainian requires a more clipped and disciplined sound. These honest vowels make it hard for English speakers to pronounce “рашизм” as it is supposed to be pronounced — and even if we were to pronounce it correctly in Ukrainian, it would not sound like much of anything in English.

This is why, to claim “рашизм” for English, I have to transliterate it — as Ukrainians also generally do — as “ruscism.” The mechanically correct transcription would be “rashysm,” which is hardly clear. We have to go back and get the “u” to indicate Russia, and we take the “ism” because we know this is about ideology. And while the Ukrainian consonant “ш” demands a “sh,” the resulting “rushism” would suggest a weakness for American talk radio or Canadian classic rock. We know that “ш” did not actually come from an “sh” in the first place; it came from both the “ss” of Russia and the “sc” of fascism. We choose “sc,” and get “ruscism.” As in Ukrainian, a “sh” sound joins the two parts. But now, in English, the visible “sc” recalls the unusual spelling of *fascism*, as it should.

In English, if you believe in racism, you are a racist; if you believe in fascism, you are a fascist. This lexical progression is similar in Ukrainian. “Расизм,” racism, has the associated personal form “расист,” racist. “Фашизм,” fascism, yields “фашист,” fascist. Likewise, the new word “рашизм” has “рашист,” or ruscist. (Unlike English, Ukrainian also generates female forms of these words.) Ukrainians sometimes refer to individual Russians as “ruscists,” making lists, for example, of prominent Russian supporters of the war. But there is also the tendency to refer to [all Russian soldiers in Ukraine as “ruscists.”](#) This runs into certain difficulties: Given the imperial character of the Russian state, a very high proportion of the Russian soldiers in Ukraine belong to national minorities. This suggests a deeper problem, which is that even soldiers dying for a fascist cause need not be fascists themselves.



Whereas Russian leaders have intensified the [Soviet tradition of referring to contemporary enemies as “fascists,”](#) in Ukraine, the word refers more simply to the horrors of World War II, which were even deeper there than in Russia. When Ukrainians speak of “ruscism,” they are accusing Russians of a deep betrayal of what should have been a common inheritance and a common memory. They are accusing Russians of becoming what should have been defeated long ago.

**Few beyond Ukraine** seem to know that millions of Ukrainians, exercising freedom of speech in a country that allows it, have invented and are deploying a new word. “Ruscism” will sound strange at first. So did “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing,” other words that emerged from (Eastern) European wars. The concepts that clarify our world today were once strange and new. But when they point to something, they can take hold.

[Russian fascism](#) is certainly a phenomenon that requires a concept. The Russian Federation promotes the extreme right everywhere. Putin is the idol of white supremacists around the world. Prominent Russian fascists are given access to mass media during wars, including this one. Members of the Russian elite, above all Putin himself, rely increasingly on fascist concepts. Putin’s very justification of the war in Ukraine, as an act of cleansing violence that will return Russia to itself, represents a Christian form of fascism. The recent publication, in an official Russian news service, of [what I consider an openly genocidal handbook](#), providing a plan for the elimination of the Ukrainian nation as such, confirms all this. Moscow is the center of fascism in our world.

The greatest risk of such an effectively compact word is that it will carry the sense that all Russians are fascists, simply by virtue of being Russian. Given that half the Ukrainian population is either displaced or trapped by war, with thousands of civilians killed and hundreds of thousands deported, a tendency toward general condemnation is not surprising; the fact that Ukrainians have had a very hard time convincing Russians that a war is actually taking place doesn’t help. But a usage that identifies all Russians as fascists would repeat the error it is meant to rectify. Thus far, the word is generally [used as a response to particular actions](#), like kidnapping children or executing civilians.

The word is not only a condemnation of Russian actions; it is also an offering to the Russian language. The words “ruscist” and “ruscism” already flourish in Russian, or at least in Ukrainian Russian. I actually heard them for the first time in Russian, not in Ukrainian. It will be interesting to see if they catch on inside the Russian Federation. If they did, they would most likely be criminalized by the Russian state. Russia today is a country where it is illegal to call this war a “war,” and where reading a poem or showing a blank poster is deemed a slander of the army. Given Putin’s felt need to define the enemy of the moment as fascist, a word that points to Russian fascism is unlikely to be tolerated.

And so we see a difference between official Russia and unofficial Ukraine, one that is not about myths or ethnicity or even language preferences, exactly, but rather about how words matter in wartime, under pressure. In the tyranny, they threaten, because they might reveal truth; in the democracy, they conceptualize and suggest action. This difference is visible on the battlefield, where the Russian Army is conformist and cowering, and the outnumbered and outgunned Ukrainian Army adaptable and creative. We also see a difference between Ukrainians and monolingual people generally. There is a liveliness inherent in Ukrainian code-switching that makes constructing the word “рашизм” possible — and once constructed, the word has a liveliness of its own. We can appreciate Ukrainian creativity, and perhaps borrow from it.

That “ruscism” is used to describe the enemy has implications for how Ukrainians define their own values. It stigmatizes Russia as an invader committing an injustice that can be linked to past injustices, and whose leaders abuse language to hide these basic facts. But it also takes as axiomatic (and thus affirms) that fascism is what is to be resisted. The language has supplied a new thing, and, as Hannah Arendt reminds us, new things are the best we can hope for in totalitarian times. The Ukrainian language has offered a neologism whose formation helps us to see deeper into the creativity of another culture, and whose meaning helps us to see why this war is fought — and why it must be won.

HEADLINE	04/24 Israel closes Gaza border; pressure Hamas
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-closes-gaza-border-in-effort-to-pressure-hamas-to-halt-rocket-attacks-11650808823?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-closes-gaza-border-in-effort-to-pressure-hamas-to-halt-rocket-attacks-11650808823?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>TEL AVIV, Israel—Israel on Sunday closed its civilian border crossing with the Gaza Strip, preventing thousands of Gazans from getting to work, in Israel in an effort to pressure Gaza’s ruler Hamas to halt <a href="#">rocket attacks against southern Israel</a>.</p> <p>The Israeli closure comes after Palestinian militants fired two rockets at Israel Friday night and one on Saturday morning, the third round of rocket attacks against southern Israel since Monday night. No Israelis have been injured by the rockets. One Gazan was injured Friday after a rocket fell short of reaching Israel and landed within Gaza, the Israeli military said in a statement.</p> <p>No militant group has claimed responsibility for the recent rocket attacks.</p> <p>Hamas and other Gaza militant groups have been threatening to attack Israel over near-daily clashes last week between Israeli police and Palestinians at Jerusalem’s most sensitive holy site, the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, called the Temple Mount by Jews.</p> <p>Israel responded to the first rocket attacks last week by targeting militant sites in Gaza with airstrikes. After Saturday’s round of rocket fire, Israeli officials said they chose to take economic measures against the strip to pressure Hamas, which has a tight grip over the entire enclave.</p> <p>“We have a zero-tolerance policy for rocket fire. This is why we took measures to prevent workers from entering Israel from Gaza,” said Israel’s Foreign Minister Yair Lapid in a press briefing Sunday. “Militants in Gaza are hurting their own people,” he said.</p> <p>Israeli officials say Hamas is currently uninterested in an escalation, but may be struggling to prevent smaller, independent militant groups from firing rockets at Israel. At the same time, Israel says Hamas is intentionally trying to stir conflict in Jerusalem and the West Bank, as it continues efforts to increase its popularity in those areas.</p> <p>Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Friday praised mediation efforts by Egypt, Qatar and the United Nations to prevent an escalation, but said continued tensions in Jerusalem or airstrikes in Gaza could lead to “dangerous consequences.”</p> <p>“No one can control events if the situation in Gaza and at Al Aqsa continue this way,” Mr. Haniyeh told the U.N.’s peace envoy to the region, Tor Wennesland, in a phone call Friday, according to a statement from Hamas.</p> <p>Twelve-thousand Gazans have permits to work in Israel, with many working in the construction industry and other business sectors. Israel’s government recently announced its intention to authorize another 8,000 permits. Israeli security officials see these workers’ relatively high salaries as a significant economic windfall for the poverty-stricken Gaza Strip and one Hamas would have an interest in preserving.</p> <p>Israel and Egypt have jointly blockaded Gaza since Hamas, considered a terrorist group by the U.S., took over the strip in 2007.</p> <p>The Gaza Workers Union said the move to close the border crossing was a form of “collective punishment” that would cause great harm to Palestinian workers just as they’re preparing for the Eid ul-Fitr holiday that marks the end of Ramadan.</p> <p>Sami Amassi, the head of the union, said in a statement on Saturday that the Israeli decision showed Israel had not approved the worker permits to benefit Gaza’s civilians, but as a measure “to exploit them for political and security or any escalation with Gaza.”</p>

	<p>Tensions in Jerusalem are running higher than usual this year after a rare overlapping of religious holidays that have brought tens of thousands of worshipers to Jerusalem's Old City since last Friday as Muslims observe Ramadan and Jews celebrated Passover, which ended Friday night.</p> <p>Palestinians say the clashes in Jerusalem are due to anger over what they say are Israel's violations of the status quo on the Al Aqsa compound, which allows only Muslims to pray there and non-Muslims to visit. They point to increased visits by religious Jews, many organized by groups that openly lobby for further Jewish control at the site. They also say Israel's police use unnecessary force at the site, and too often enact measures that limit when Muslims can pray there.</p> <p>Mr. Lapid on Sunday repeated his assertion of recent days that Israel has no plans to alter the status quo on the contested hilltop. He said Hamas and other militant groups organized riots intentionally aimed at producing videos that would stir Muslim anger at Israel.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Russia execution site, underground prison</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-turned-a-bucha-building-into-an-execution-site-and-underground-prison-11650715201?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos5">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-turned-a-bucha-building-into-an-execution-site-and-underground-prison-11650715201?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos5</a>
GIST	<p>BUCHA, Ukraine—The Russian troops arrived in waves in Bucha, each one crueller than the last, residents said, all seeking to hold this once-sleepy town outside Kyiv through fear, manipulation and coercion.</p> <p>The soldiers, a combination of infantry soldiers, paratroopers and troops associated with <a href="#">Russia's mercenary Wagner Group</a>, set up headquarters in the town to prepare for the coming assault on Kyiv, said Ukraine's military and Ukrainian officials.</p> <p>The nerve center of their operations was a Soviet-era building on 144 Yablunska Street. Soldiers stationed there and in smaller outposts up and down the street guarded it fiercely, turning the leafy road that translates as Apple Street into the scene of some of <a href="#">the grisliest killings of Ukrainians</a> that have come to light since the start of the conflict.</p> <p>The nondescript four-story office building on the town's southernmost stretch was one of the first sites where Ukrainians were questioned, tortured, killed or detained, according to Bucha residents and local officials.</p> <p>Nearly 100 soldiers were housed at 144 Yablunska Street, along with sensitive radio-electronic equipment used to control operations in Bucha, as well as in the nearby towns of Irpin and Hostomel, said Ukrainian officials.</p> <p>More than 30 Russian military units in all came through Bucha, mostly from Russia's Far East and Siberia, including the 14th Separate Special Forces Brigade from Khabarovsk, the 38th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade and paratroopers from Pskov, in western Russia.</p> <p>Bucha Mayor Anatoly Fedoruk said the Russians divided the city into several zones and worked through a list of some 40 names of local politicians and state officials who lived in each zone, detaining and killing those they found.</p> <p>He said he saw his name was at the bottom of the first of two pages of names not listed in alphabetical order. The mayor managed to avoid the Russians. Russian troops shot and killed the mayor of neighboring Hostomel as he was handing out aid to residents.</p> <p>When Mykola Zakharchenko, who worked as a security guard on the grounds of 144 Yablunska Street before the Russians arrived, was detained on March 4 with another man, the grounds of the building were already strewn with dead bodies. The two were led with their hands in the air to a side yard where the bodies of seven men who had been shot were lying face down in pools of blood.</p>

The Russian troops told them to look at the bodies, get on their knees and confess to being members of the Ukrainian resistance.

Mr. Zakharchenko said he wasn't fighting and handed over his phone, a late-model iPhone his son had given him, so that the Russian soldiers could check the contacts and photographs. He watched a Russian soldier download the contents of his phone onto a computer and then look up his domestic identity number. The Russian officer then asked him about time he had spent in the Russian city of Tula as a welder in 2018.

"We've seen your proletariat past," said the officer, who was wearing paratrooper gear according to Mr. Zakharchenko. "Get inside."

For the next four days, Mr. Zakharchenko lived in the headquarters' basement, a Soviet-era bomb shelter turned underground prison, with some 130 other people. They were given leftover food and military meals for days as the men, women and children struggled to find space to lay down at night.

"Our knees almost gave out when we went down," he said. "The smell was strong."

Over the next weeks, the Yablunska Street headquarters became chaotic. Blood from those shot and dragged from room to room stained the floors. Trash piled in the hallways, and bottles of beer and wine littered the floor. Human excrement piled up in buckets and on the floor.

There was similar violence at other Russian bases on Yablunska Street and nearby. Russian soldiers took over one yellow, two-story house with an adjoining garage, where neighbors said people were led and shot.

Northwest of 144 Yablunska Street, Russian troops holed up in buildings a few streets away from one another, one at 7 Ostrovsky Street and another at 104 Vokzalna Street, close to the site where Ukrainian forces destroyed a Russian armored column the day Russia rolled into town.

One Bucha resident who said she was inside the Ostrovsky address described the soldiers who stayed there. "They drank there," she said. "They had fun there. They were having a party."

She said many of the soldiers at the Ostrovsky building were young and frightened, brought to tears by the strain of the war.

"They wanted their mother," she said. "They didn't want to fight." She added that they said they were forced to kill people.

Russian troops took over a children's camp, digging trenches at its entrance. When the Russians left, local residents found five people there with their hands tied. They had been shot in the back of the head. Radio equipment and documents were left in another makeshift base.

In the center of Bucha, some Russian troops looted not just supermarkets but the local hospital as well, taking surgical tools and equipment for a field hospital they had set up in Hostomel.

Anton Dovhopol, the head doctor at the Bucha hospital, suggested to Russian soldiers that they dig mass graves to prevent the dead bodies from spreading disease.

He also asked them to give civilians more time to get home before curfew. Since the Russians didn't change their clocks to Ukrainian time when they invaded, civilians and troops were running on two different clocks.

"It was the difference between curfew times, that was when most people died," he said.

He said on March 11 one of the top officers that patrolled the center of the city, a soldier identified by Ukrainian authorities as Artyom Lazarev, went into the hospital and suggested Mr. Dovhopol become acting mayor under the Russians, a role that would have forced him to appear in videos appealing to residents to obey the Russians.

“He was euphoric, telling me in front of all my subordinates that they were protecting the Russian world and that together we can build a wonderful future,” said Mr. Dovhopol.

The Russian officer said he would be back the next day to make sure Mr. Dovhopol agreed. Within hours, the doctor left the city.

“If I had refused, they would have shot me in the head,” he said. “Thank goodness we managed to get out.”

After the city descended into panic during the Russian troops’ occupation, the town woke up one morning to find them gone.

“We were living in bomb shelters the whole time, we had no idea they had left until the shooting stopped,” said Lidia, a cleaner at a church across the street from the children’s camp.

Some of the Russian soldiers who were in Bucha returned home to awards. The 64th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, one of the units that occupied Bucha, received one of the military’s highest honors from Russian President Vladimir Putin following their withdrawal, turning it into an elite Guards Brigade.

“Putin knew about the atrocities his soldiers committed here and all he could say was ‘good job,’” said Mr. Fedoruk, the mayor.

Moscow has denied targeting civilians in its military assault on Ukraine and called video and photographic images from Bucha staged.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Russia war long-term environmental impact</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-war-in-ukraine-could-have-environmental-impact-that-lasts-decades-11650801603?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-war-in-ukraine-could-have-environmental-impact-that-lasts-decades-11650801603?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p>The <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> is poisoning the nation’s air, water and soil, with environmental-health experts saying pollutants released by the continuing assault could take years to clean up while raising the risk of cancer and respiratory ailments as well as developmental delays in children.</p> <p>On top of the crushing toll of thousands of lives lost in the conflict, experts are concerned about the health effects of exposure to heavy metals, and to toxic gases and particulates from explosions, fires and building collapses. The potential health impacts could reach beyond Ukraine’s borders, as the pollutants are carried downwind and downstream, according to the experts.</p> <p>“We’re facing a huge environmental problem,” said Stefan Smith, program coordinator for disasters and conflict at the United Nations Environment Program.</p> <p>About 100 inspectors working for the Ukraine government are sampling soil and water at sites of concern, said Iryna Stavchuk, Ukraine’s deputy minister of environmental protection and natural resources. The full scale of the harm to the environment is difficult to assess because inspectors lack access to many regions of the country, she said.</p> <p>Contamination sites are also being identified by nongovernmental organizations, including PAX, a Dutch nonprofit that documented pollution in Syria and other conflict zones; the Conflict and Environment Observatory, a U.K. charity; and Ecoaction, a Ukraine-based environmental group. By combing through eyewitness posts on social media and messaging platforms such as Telegram, and cross-referencing those</p>

with satellite images and Google Earth maps, the groups have each documented damage at more than 100 sites, ranging from power plants to military installations and water-treatment plants.

“What we’re seeing is really a kind of crowdsourced environmental detective work,” Mr. Smith said.

Many contaminated sites have been identified near the cities of Kyiv, Luhansk and Kharkiv, according to Evgenia Zasiadko, head of the climate department at Ecoaction.

As fighting [intensifies in the eastern part](#) of the country, [a heavily industrialized corridor](#) with chemical factories, coal mines and refineries could come under fire.

Damage to coal mines in the region could poison the groundwater that small villages in the area rely on for drinking water. “There is a major risk for local people and for longer environmental impacts if military activities happen there,” Ms. Stavchuk said.

In other parts of Ukraine, public-health experts expressed concern over the release of heavy metals such as lead and cadmium from industrial sites—which are linked to developmental delays in children—into the air and drinking water. “In the midst of a war, it’s hard to quantitate the exposure” to environmental pollutants, said Barry Levy, an adjunct professor of public health at Tufts University School of Medicine and an expert on the effects of war on public health.

After missile debris damaged fertilizer tanks in the Ternopil region, east of Lviv, river-water samples downstream showed ammonia levels 163 times above normal and nitrates 50 times as high, according to Ms. Stavchuk.

Across Ukraine, hundreds of enormous reservoirs store about 6 billion tons of liquid waste from mining and industrial activity, [according to a 2019 report](#) by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Those toxic chemicals could spill into nearby land or rivers if the reservoirs were damaged.

[The conflict](#) has knocked out more than a dozen water facilities, including water-treatment plants and dams, said Wim Zwijnenburg, project leader of PAX’s effort to monitor environmental damage sites in Ukraine. Damage to water-treatment plants has left untreated wastewater to wash into rivers or streams.

Air pollution is another major concern, according to Neta Crawford, a professor of political science at Boston University and co-director of the Costs of War Project at Brown University. Depending on how long the war lasts, emissions from tanks, military aircraft and trucks could amount to “as much as a small or medium-sized country in an entire year,” she said.

Russian strikes have targeted fuel depots and refineries across Ukraine, prompting large fires and the release of pollutants including soot, methane and carbon dioxide.

Previous conflicts suggest that those emissions can have long-distance impacts. In Kuwait in the early 1990s, for example, Iraqi soldiers [set fire to hundreds of oil wells](#) that burned for months. Air monitoring at the time estimated that the burning oil made up [2% of global carbon-dioxide emissions](#) that year, about as much as emissions from all of Canada. Ice core samples collected years later in Tibetan glaciers suggested that the soot [was carried hundreds of miles](#) by the wind, coating the glaciers.

In cities that have been targeted by Russian strikes, cement dust released into the air by crumbling buildings poses a threat to residents and rescue workers, according to Philip Landrigan, director of the Global Public Health Program and Global Pollution Observatory at Boston College.

The fine particles are highly alkaline and can irritate the airways and cause scarring in the lungs when breathed in, said Dr. Landrigan, who led major studies of first responders who combed the rubble of the World Trade Center towers after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. He likened breathing the dust to “inhaling a fine powder of Drano.”



	<p>Asbestos used in construction is another urban hazard, and can linger for years because the mineral doesn't decompose or wash away in rains. Asbestos <a href="#">has been linked to various cancers</a>, with effects felt decades later. "When people inhale it, it gets down into the lungs and then it's like a time bomb," Dr. Landrigan said of airborne asbestos.</p> <p>Environmental damage is often ignored during wartime but should be closely tracked, according to Mr. Zwijnenburg of PAX. "The environment is not just a matter of saving trees and planting flowers," he said. "It's very elementary to people because if it gets contaminated, they can't live there anymore."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Changing jobs, big raises keep inflation up</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/workers-are-changing-jobs-raking-in-big-raises-and-keeping-inflation-high-11650792602?mod=hp_lead_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/workers-are-changing-jobs-raking-in-big-raises-and-keeping-inflation-high-11650792602?mod=hp_lead_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>Job-switchers are often reaping double-digit pay increases, a new survey shows, a phenomenon that is demonstrating <a href="#">bargaining power for workers</a> while <a href="#">threatening to keep inflation high</a>.</p> <p>About 64% of job-switchers said their current job provides more pay than their previous job. Among these workers, nearly half received a raise of 11% or more, according to a <a href="#">ZipRecruiter</a> survey provided exclusively to The Wall Street Journal. Nearly 9% are now making at least 50% more.</p> <p>Elevated rates of job switching could continue: Among prime-age workers aged 25 to 54, around 20% anticipate leaving within a year, while another 26% said they see staying one to two years, the survey said. Historically, the average job lasts four years, said Julia Pollak, chief economist at ZipRecruiter.</p> <p>Job switching is a key driver behind <a href="#">broader wage growth</a> that developed as the economy rebounded from the Covid-19 pandemic. Workers who change jobs often command bigger pay increases and employers also raise wages to compete to keep existing workers, economists say. Annual wage growth for the typical worker hit 6% in March, averaged over three months, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's wage tracker. That is up from 3.4% a year earlier and above the 3.7% rate in February 2020, before the pandemic, when the unemployment rate was at a 50-year low.</p> <p>The consumer-price index rose 8.5% in March from a year earlier, according to the Labor Department, the strongest annual rate of inflation since 1981. <a href="#">The broadening of wage gains</a> throughout the economy could keep inflation high in coming quarters even if dynamics such as supply-chain disruptions and an energy crunch recede.</p> <p>"It's great to get wage gains but not if it's pushing up inflation further," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at Grant Thornton.</p> <p>Nearly 27% of economists <a href="#">surveyed by The Wall Street Journal in April</a> said wage growth poses the biggest inflationary risk this year, a higher share than those who cited either the Russia-Ukraine war and supply-chain disruptions as the main inflationary threats. Companies are paying more to attract and retain workers in a competitive labor market and will need to pass on price increases to compensate, the thinking goes.</p> <p>The dynamic poses a challenge for the Federal Reserve, which in March <a href="#">began raising rates for the first time since 2018</a>. The central bank is trying to bring inflation down from a four-decade high closer to its 2% target.</p> <p>Wage growth was weak in the years following the 2007-09 recession, even when unemployment fell to historically low levels. Some economists argued that was because <a href="#">workers were reluctant to switch jobs</a>. Today, workers are quitting at rates that well exceed those preceding the pandemic, receiving large wage increases.</p> <p>That includes employees like 37-year-old Dain Laguna.</p>

Mr. Laguna was working in a human-resources job at a home-improvement company last year, feeling undervalued at an hourly wage of \$19. Rising inflation started eating into his already tight budget. For instance, prices for fresh organic food—which he prefers to feed to his kids—became a financial stretch.

“I’m the father of two children, and I can’t work for pennies,” Mr. Laguna said. “Stuff is expensive nowadays.”

Higher costs and lack of upward job mobility spurred him to revamp his LinkedIn profile and start applying for jobs last fall. He landed a new human-resources role, which he started in February. In his new job, Mr. Laguna helps onboard workers into information-technology jobs at large companies. Recruiters are still reaching out to Mr. Laguna to gauge his interest in new jobs, as HR workers are now in high demand, the Lexington, N.C., resident said.

Mr. Laguna makes the equivalent of about \$28 an hour, or about 50% more than in his previous role. “My cup still does not runneth over, but I also don’t feel like I’m drowning anymore,” he said. “I make enough money now where if a random \$250 car repair bill comes up, that’s fine; that’s not an issue. I don’t have to go into debt.”

About 2.9% of workers quit their jobs in February—far above the prepandemic February 2020 rate of 2.3%, as workers are confident in their job prospects. The majority of workers who quit last year and didn’t enter retirement say they are employed in full- or part-time roles, a Pew Research Center survey [published in March found](#).

The so-called quits rate appears to be peaking, a possible sign [the labor market is cooling slightly](#). Still, rising quits translate into wage gains with a lag, so even if quits plateau in the coming months, wages can keep going up for a period, said Alex Domash, a research fellow at Harvard University.

“But even at current levels, wage growth is incompatible with the Fed’s inflation target,” said Mr. Domash, adding that the current rate implies sustained inflation above 5%.

ZipRecruiter’s survey, which was conducted in February, was drawn from 2,064 U.S. residents who had started a new job within the past six months, and doesn’t necessarily reflect overall job-market dynamics. There are no direct historical data for comparison. However, the data offer a picture of worker bargaining power that has the potential to broaden.

“Companies facing stiff competition for scarce talent have been prompted to bump up wages, relax job requirements, expand benefits, and offer more favorable terms of employment,” Ms. Pollak said. Some 37% of recent new hires had been recruited by their employer and nearly 22% reported receiving signing bonuses, according to ZipRecruiter’s survey.

The share of employed job seekers expecting their current employer to counter with higher pay if they resign hit 54% in March, up from 43% in January, according to [a separate monthly survey by ZipRecruiter](#).

Annual wage growth for the typical job-switcher was 7.1% in March, averaged over three months, up from 4% a year earlier and the fastest pace since records began in 1997, Atlanta Fed data show. Those wage pressures are filtering through to everyone else as employers compete to keep staff. Wage growth for those who stayed in their jobs rose at 5.3% in March, near the fastest pace since at least 1997.

“The moment an employer is scared people are leaving, it’s going to give pay raises for everybody,” said Guy Berger, principal economist for LinkedIn, the professional social network. “So even though the rate for job-stayers is lower, it’s still gone up a ton.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/japanese-yens-drop-raises-potential-for-broader-market-trouble-11650726762?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/japanese-yens-drop-raises-potential-for-broader-market-trouble-11650726762?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>The Japanese yen has tumbled to a 20-year low against the U.S. dollar. That might be bad news for markets far beyond Tokyo.</p> <p>Traders around the world watch the yen's rise and fall not just to follow Japanese markets but also to gauge how investors globally are feeling. Usually, when markets are rallying, the yen tends to weaken against other currencies. When markets get turbulent, the yen tends to gain ground.</p> <p>That dynamic has been upended this spring.</p> <p>The yen has fallen 12% against the dollar in 2022, even as the <a href="#">Russia-Ukraine war</a> sent global stocks sliding. Its fall has been so steep that it ranks as the worst-performing currency this year out of <a href="#">41 tracked by The Wall Street Journal</a>—worse than the Russian ruble or Turkish lira.</p> <p>If the yen were a smaller currency, its slide might have less importance to financial markets. But the yen is key to global finance, ranking as the third-most-traded currency in the world. Its rapid descent stands to affect not just Japan, but also something seemingly far removed from the country: the \$23 trillion U.S. Treasury's market.</p> <p>The Federal Reserve is poised to begin winding down its extensive bond-buying program as early as next month. The central bank is counting on investors like Japanese institutions—the biggest foreign buyers of U.S. Treasury's—to step in and help absorb the increased supply of Treasury's on the market.</p> <p>But the yen's rout might cut into Japanese demand for Treasury's. That is because as the yen weakens, Japanese investors with dollar-denominated assets will have to pay more to hedge against the risk of currency fluctuations cutting into their returns.</p> <p>In theory, relatively generous U.S. yields should make Treasury's still attractive to Japanese investors. The 10-year U.S. Treasury has a yield of 2.905%; the 10-year Japanese government bond has a comparatively paltry yield of 0.25%.</p> <p>But hedging has gotten so expensive that the extra yield a Japanese investor would get from holding Treasury's instead of Japanese government bonds has almost disappeared. After factoring in the cost of taking out currency protection, the difference between the 10-year Treasury yield and the 10-year Japanese government bond yield is just 0.2 percentage point, a Goldman Sachs Group Inc. analysis using 12-month rolling hedges found.</p> <p>Because of “a fear of the unwinding of the weak Japanese yen and pricey U.S. stocks,” Japanese institutions such as insurance companies are likely to focus their portfolios more on ultralong-term Japanese government bonds instead of U.S. assets, said Daisuke Karakama, chief market economist at Mizuho Bank, in emailed comments.</p> <p>Japanese investors who decide to stay in the Treasury's market might bypass higher hedging costs by foregoing taking out protection against currency fluctuations, said Ugo Lancioni, head of global currency at Neuberger Berman.</p> <p>But that carries its own risk. If the yen were to abruptly rally against the dollar, “your yield advantage could completely erode in a few days,” Mr. Lancioni said. Traders betting on sustained yen weakness were burned by rapid and violent unwinds of that bet during the Asian financial crisis in 1998, as well as the great financial crisis in 2008.</p> <p>Data shows Japanese investors have been trimming their foreign bondholdings. They have been net sellers of foreign bonds in all but one month since November, according to Japan's Ministry of Finance, selling a net 2.36 trillion yen (\$18.4 billion) in overseas bonds last month.</p>

A more pronounced pullback in bond buying from Japanese investors would come at a particularly inopportune time for their U.S. counterparts. Bond investors have already taken sharp losses this year.

There is also the danger that selling in U.S. bonds ripples across other markets—something investors saw happen in the first few months of 2021. Japanese banks, insurers and other institutions dumped tens of billions of dollars of U.S. bondholdings ahead of the end of their fiscal year, exacerbating a sharp rise in bond yields, especially during Asian trading hours. U.S. stocks tumbled.

Many blamed stocks' fall on the swift rise in bond yields. Higher rates reduce the premium investors get from holding riskier assets over Treasuries, making stocks look less attractive.

Ultimately, stocks recovered quickly from the 2021 episode, notching double-digit percentage gains for the year. But some investors see potential brewing for another pullback.

"If we get another round of bond selling, that will likely further challenge stocks," said Peter Boockvar, chief investment officer at Bleakley Advisory Group.

There is a chance the yen's descent reverses before investors see broader market ripples. Speculators who have been loading up on bets on the yen's fall could abruptly unwind their positions, causing the yen to strengthen quickly, not just against the dollar but other currencies the yen is heavily traded against, such as the Brazilian real and Australian dollar.

But so far, there are few indications of such a move happening.

Hedge funds are still betting heavily on the yen falling further, with net positions against the yen recently hitting their highest in more than three years, according to recent data from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

"I don't see any force that's going to stop it at this point unless Japan changes its tactics," said Mark Grant, chief global strategist at Colliers Securities.

The other potential trigger for a yen reversal: more heavy-handed intervention from Japan. The Bank of Japan could consider raising interest rates earlier than projected, or the Ministry of Finance could directly intervene in the currency markets.

Yet some investors are skeptical Japanese officials will step in.

Inflation hasn't run hot enough in Japan for the Bank of Japan to necessarily justify raising interest rates, said Idanna Appio, portfolio manager at First Eagle Investment Management.

"Maybe if the yen were to worsen significantly from here or there was political pressure from other countries like the U.S. saying Japan was trying to gain an advantage, they'd step in. But I don't see it happening," Ms. Appio said.

For now, some investors are waiting on the sidelines, rather than trying to time bets on the yen's movements.

"It's getting to an absurdly cheap level," said Peter Kinsella, global head of foreign exchange strategy at Swiss private bank UBP, of the currency.

Mr. Kinsella had bet on the yen falling against the dollar up until a few weeks ago, when he unwound the trade because he thought it had run too far. If the yen surpasses 132 or so against the dollar, he said he would consider placing bets on it rising.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/lessons-in-patriotism-used-to-justify-ukraine-invasion-to-russias-children">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/lessons-in-patriotism-used-to-justify-ukraine-invasion-to-russias-children</a>
GIST	<p>When Pavel Tkachev heard about the special lessons on the war in <a href="#">Ukraine</a> that took place at his son's high school in the Primorsky district of St Petersburg earlier this month, he was livid.</p> <p>"I called them and said this is ridiculous," he told the <i>Observer</i>. "We're the parents and it is we who should tell the kids about patriotism and the 'special operation', not the schools."</p> <p>Similar lectures were delivered to students in schools across the country, decrying "fascists" in Ukraine and suggesting that <a href="#">Russia</a> was acting in "self-defence". Tkachev said he was particularly angry over comparisons to the second world war, which he called "unforgivable".</p> <p>School officials "shrugged their shoulders and said these are the instructions", he said. "I was disgusted."</p> <p>Russia's plans to overhaul education have gone hand-in-hand with its war in Ukraine. Officials are writing curricula to justify the invasion, and have suggested schools will hold flag-raising and sing the national anthem each morning from September. A major Russian textbook publisher is <a href="#">reportedly using autochecking software</a> to edit out positive references to Ukraine in its schoolbooks.</p> <p>According to Russia's education ministry, history will become a compulsory subject from the first grade. "We will never allow it [to be written] that we somehow treated other nations – our fraternal nations of Ukraine and Belarus – poorly," said education minister Sergey Kravtsov, who announced the new initiative at the opening of an exhibition called "Everyday Nazism". "We will do everything in our power so that historical memory is preserved."</p> <p>There is a clear degree of political opportunism in using schoolchildren to deliver propaganda. As Russia declared a disputed victory in Mariupol last week, Andrei Turchak, head of the ruling United Russia party, made a beeline for a local school in the city.</p> <p>While there, he told the students: "Victory will be ours. The enemy will be defeated, and peaceful life on this earth will finally come ... we will liberate this territory and clean it from the fascist demons."</p> <p>But there is also a new level of pressure on teachers, sometimes to organise pro-war photo-ops with children, or in other cases to hide their anti-war feeling from their students. "I know a lot of teachers who have hidden their online profiles, they're very careful speaking about politics in school," said Maria, a teacher at a middle school in Voronezh.</p> <p>Lyubov Zhiltsova, a maths teacher and politician from Pskov, faced a police inquest last week for an image on social media of her holding a sign that said "No to war".</p> <p>"The whole world has turned upside down for me. I prepare events for 9 May [Victory Day] every year, I write a script, I rehearse ... And now how can I talk about it with children?" she <a href="#">told Radio Svoboda</a>. "I couldn't keep silent, I was burning."</p> <p>One of the first Russians to be targeted under a new law banning "fakes" about the Russian military was a schoolteacher who now faces 10 years in prison. "I hoped to break through the <a href="#">propaganda that is being fed to this country</a>. But look where it got me," Irina Gen, a 55-year-old English and German language teacher said this month. She was reported by her own students.</p> <p>Educational officials have promised further changes to Russia's curriculum and new patriotic initiatives clearly inspired by the war. Some, such as the flag and anthem, seem inspired by similar rightwing efforts in the United States.</p> <p>Others are specific to Russia's war in Ukraine. Kravtsov told Putin last week that they had already begun developing lessons about the "goals of the special operation – to help our people, denazification, the demilitarisation of Donbas".</p>

	<p>The goal was to fight the “squall of disinformation ... fakes about Russia”.</p> <p>The lessons have “conditionally been called ‘Conversations about important topics’”.</p> <p>“And from 1 September, in addition, there will be the raising of the national flag at the beginning of the school week, the performance of the national anthem,” he said.</p> <p>Leaked manuals for this year’s special lectures have shown that Russian teachers are being told to tell students that Russia has not invaded Ukraine, but is instead practising “self-defence against the threats created to us and from an even greater calamity than what is happening today”.</p> <p>In a separate lesson on “anti-Russian sanctions”, teachers are told to ask students whether the sanctions are fair, whether they’ll actually strengthen the Russian economy, and whom will they harm (everyone).</p> <p>“The teacher, together with the students, concludes that economic policy in recent years has been aimed at increasing the protection of domestic producers, ensuring its sustainability in the face of external crises,” the documents read.</p> <p>The lessons manuals, or <i>metodichki</i>, are so far not compulsory, noted Denis Lanshchikov, a history teacher at a private school in Moscow. But many teachers and administrators at state schools appeared to have leaned into them of their own volition, either because they supported the war or because they thought “big brother is watching”.</p> <p>“It seems to me that it isn’t yet a top-down attempt to make schools totalitarian,” he said. “But then every person ... creates this totalitarianism himself.”</p> <p>Even grade-school students are facing some level of indoctrination. “In all the schools they held these special events dedicated to the topic that Russia is fighting with fascists,” said Marina Litvinovich, an opposition politician in Moscow. In her son’s fourth-grade class, the children were given a “light version”.</p> <p>“They don’t quite get it. So they went through the [second world war] Leningrad blockade – and during the lesson they also said that ‘look, this is how Russia is continuing to fight against fascism’.”</p> <p>“The kids are kind of cool toward it,” she said of her son. She compared it to the indoctrination that she went through as a student in the late Soviet period, saying: “When the Soviet Union fell, all this indoctrination flew away ... so I’m not extremely worried about it, it will fly away when they meet reality. It’s bad but not a catastrophe.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Russia goal: seize southern Ukraine</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/22/ukraine-south-occupation-russian-military-chief-rustam-minnekayev">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/22/ukraine-south-occupation-russian-military-chief-rustam-minnekayev</a>
GIST	<p>A senior Russian military commander has said the goal of Russia’s new offensive is to seize control of southern Ukraine and form a land bridge to Crimea, indicating that Russia plans a permanent occupation of Ukrainian territory taken in the war.</p> <p>Rustam Minnekayev, acting commander of the central military district, also told members of a defence industry forum on Friday that control over southern Ukraine would give Russia access to Transnistria, a pro-Russian breakaway region of Moldova, indicating that Russia may attack the port city of Odesa or launch an economic blockade of the area.</p> <p>The remarks directly contradict earlier claims from Vladimir Putin that Russia was not planning to occupy Ukrainian cities permanently and suggests the Kremlin is changing tack after its failed offensive toward Kyiv, which appeared to seek regime change.</p>



The statement was the first by a high-ranking official about the Russian military's goals to occupy territory as it manoeuvres for an anticipated "battle for Donbas" in Ukraine's east.

"Since the beginning of the second phase of the special operation ... one of the tasks of the Russian army is to establish full control over Donbas and southern Ukraine. This will provide a land corridor to Crimea, as well as affecting vital objects of the Ukrainian economy, Black Sea ports through which agricultural and metallurgical products are supplied to [other] countries," Minnekayev said on Friday at the annual meeting of the Union of Defence Industry Enterprises of Russia's Sverdlovsk region.

Crimea was annexed by Russia in 2014, a move not recognised by the international community.

Russia's campaign in southern Ukraine has been more successful than its attempts to take Kyiv from the north, although it has also met fierce resistance from Ukrainian troops. Russia has occupied the city of Kherson and has claimed near-total control of Mariupol, as it plans a pincer-style attack on Ukrainian forces in the eastern Donbas region.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy has accused Russia of planning to "falsify" an independence referendum in the partly occupied southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, telling Ukrainians there not to give personal information to occupying forces.

Russia was planning "to falsify a so-called referendum on your land, if an order comes from Moscow to stage such a show. And this is the reality. Be careful," Zelenskiy said.

The Kremlin refused to answer questions about Minnekayev's comments on Friday, saying the Russian defence ministry was responsible for the "special operation", meaning Russia's war in Ukraine.

It is not clear if Minnekayev was revealing details about Russia's formal plans for its offensive or expressing his personal views on the benefits of Russia's military offensive.

Minnekayev, the acting commander of one of Russia's four military districts, also said that "control over southern Ukraine will give yet another point of access to Transnistria, where facts of oppression of the Russian-speaking population have also been observed".

"Apparently, we are now at war with the whole world," Minnekayev said.

If true, that could indicate Russia would seek to take Odesa, one of Ukraine's largest cities, and seek to reinforce its positions in Transnistria, a Russian-controlled territory of Moldova that has hosted Russian troops since the fall of the Soviet Union.

With Russian backing, Transnistria fought a war against Moldova in the 1990s that left the territory with de facto independence and a garrison of 1,500 Russian troops. The region is recognised as part of Moldova. The unrecognised state is strongly influenced internationally by nostalgia for the Soviet Union and its affinity for Russia, which is fostered by state propaganda.

It is unlikely that Russian forces, which have sustained considerable losses in the early stages of the war, would be able to stage an offensive toward Odesa at the moment, much less the border with Moldova. Russian warships have been driven further from Ukraine's coast after the Moskva cruiser, a Russian flagship, sank in the Black Sea last week. Ukraine claimed it had attacked the cruiser with anti-ship missiles.

On Friday night the Russian defence ministry said one sailor had died and 27 were missing after the Moskva fire, with 396 others rescued.

	<p>Analysts said that Minnekayev's statement could mean Russia would target the economy of Odesa and the surrounding region rather than launch an attack on the city. Russian forces had already been driven back in a Ukrainian counteroffensive last month and may be close to exhaustion.</p> <p>"My interpretation of the recent statement by Minnekayev is that Russia intends to hold on to what they've taken in the south (largely assumed at this point), and try to pressure Ukraine over time on the economic front, including via blockade," Michael Kofman, research program director in the Russia studies programme at CNA, a research and analysis organisation based in Arlington, Virginia, wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>"I am sceptical of any further major offensives beyond Donbas given losses and current force availability constraints," he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Ukraine soldiers: motivated but outgunned</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/motivated-but-outgunned-ukrainian-soldiers-discuss-life-on-the-southern-front">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/motivated-but-outgunned-ukrainian-soldiers-discuss-life-on-the-southern-front</a>
GIST	<p>A group of Ukrainian infantry soldiers stood in a warehouse in south-western Ukraine when they were shelled by Russian artillery. Serhiy was hit in the face with shrapnel. He and his recent best friend Hennadiy took a selfie clutching part of the shell which did not hit them.</p> <p>Moments later, Russian tanks appeared on a hill opposite and fired across the village in front of them, including at the warehouse. Hennadiy and the rest of the group – all natives of the Zaporizhzhia region – were also hit by shrapnel and all of them suffered hearing damage.</p> <p>"They had three tanks on the hill and they were just shooting down at us. We just had rifles," said Hennadiy. "We had some equipment that the Americans and Poles gave us, but it wasn't enough to fight."</p> <p>They said they escaped from the warehouse under plumes of smoke and walked to the next village, from where they were taken to the Zaporizhzhia military hospital.</p> <p>The Guardian was granted access to the military hospital to speak to soldiers on the condition that reporters not identify specific locations of battles or publish the full names of soldiers interviewed.</p> <p>"There are plenty of people motivated to fight," said Serhiy, speaking from a hospital ward with the rest of the company who escaped from the warehouse. "But we are underarmed and desperately trying to hold the whole mass [of the Russian army]."</p> <p>"There's also just not enough time to train everyone who wants to fight," added Dmytro, another member of the company, who was lying on a bed in the ward.</p> <p>Ukraine has criticised the west for dripfeeding it arms, with President Volodymyr Zelenskiy appealing almost daily because his country cannot manufacture the weapons or ammunition it needs to fight off the Russian invaders. Equipment demanded has ranged from fighter jets and tanks, which the west has been reluctant or slow to supply, through to artillery and armoured vehicles – and most simply of all guns and ammunition.</p> <p>On Thursday the US said it would supply another \$800m (£620m) worth of arms, including 72 howitzers, taking the total value of its arms supply to more than \$3bn since the war began, including "more than 50m rounds of ammunition" according to the US president, Joe Biden. However, even when weapons are supplied it can take a fortnight or more before they arrive in Ukraine.</p> <p>Other major countries have been slower or more reluctant, most notably Germany, which has scaled back the heavy weapons it is prepared to offer Ukraine and whose chancellor, Olaf Scholz, has admitted that the stockpiles of what it is prepared to send are running short. The speed at which Ukraine's forces are using</p>

arms and ammunition has also surprised the west, which has begun to ramp up industrial production in an attempt to help Kyiv hold out.

Ukrainian forces are currently holding a line which stretches hundreds of miles from Kharkiv in the north-east to outside Mykolaiv in the south-west.

Serhiy, whose face was cut up by the shrapnel, was happy to have his picture taken despite the risks, as pointed out to him by a military press secretary, were he to be captured by Russian forces. “We’re not afraid of anything,” said Serhiy. The Guardian confirmed once more before publication that permission was granted to use the soldiers’ images.

Earlier that day, the group had avoided fire from a Russian plane. “A plane came over us and bombed us a little bit. It was a bit unpleasant,” said Serhiy, with a smile. “Well, actually, not a bit, utterly unpleasant.”

Another member of the group who escaped from the warehouse, Mykola, said the Russians had drones and knew exactly where their positions were.

“Things are very hard,” said Mykola. “I can only speak for our situation. I don’t know what it’s like for the other [battalions].”

Out of all the cities in central and eastern Ukraine, Zaporizhzhia city feels like the one where life is closest to how it was pre-war, but Russian forces occupy more than 70% of Zaporizhzhia region. Twenty per cent of the region meanwhile makes up Ukraine’s southern front, and is a battle zone between Russian and Ukrainian forces.

New restrictions placed on movements of journalists south of Zaporizhzhia city seem to indicate that the situation on the southern front is worsening. According to soldiers interviewed by the Guardian, Ukrainian forces were pushed out of at least one of the three towns and villages an hour south of the city that the New York Times visited three weeks ago.

The military press secretary for Zaporizhzhia region, Ivan Ariefiev, said journalists were not allowed to travel to those places now, but said that this was not because the situation on the front was worsening. He said the travel restrictions were because the active phase of the war on the southern front had begun.

A group of soldiers the Guardian visited in Zaporizhzhia region were around seven miles (12km) from Russian positions. They did not expect the fighting to reach them quickly and said that the lines further south would hold – though shells were landing between two and three miles away.

They said they lacked medical equipment. Between 23 people, they had just six helmets and six tourniquets – some of them hand-sewn by civilian volunteers. They said that while the helmets were on their way from Poland, volunteers and suppliers were struggling to find tourniquets even abroad.

The injured soldiers back in the hospital said they received an overwhelmingly warm welcome from local villagers, who often bought them food. On their retreat, they took the number plates off the cars they used so that the Russian soldiers would not be able to identify locals who lent them vehicles.

There have been widespread reports of local residents suspected of aiding the Ukrainian army being tortured and even killed by Russian forces.

Serhiy said he used his own car to get around the battlefield for just under two months before being injured and abandoning it. “I’ll never get [the car] back,” said Serhiy. “Although maybe it will return to me itself.”

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/women-and-children-beg-for-help-in-video-from-besieged-mariupol-steel-factory">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/women-and-children-beg-for-help-in-video-from-besieged-mariupol-steel-factory</a>
GIST	<p>A <a href="#">video has emerged</a> from inside the besieged Azovstal steel factory in Mariupol showing women and children who say they are “running out of strength” and need to be urgently evacuated to Ukrainian-controlled territory.</p> <p>The film was recorded on Thursday. The women say 15 children are living in tunnels beneath the plant, ranging in age from babies to teenagers. They are trapped together with their families and other civilians, including factory workers.</p> <p>The video shows several children, one apparently doing homework in a colouring book, surrounded by clothes and makeshift beds. A boy says he is desperate to see sunlight again and to breathe fresh air outside after weeks living in a dungeon.</p> <p>An unnamed woman says she has spent 50 days underground, since 25 February, the second day of Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine. Others say they took refuge in the plant in early March, as Russian forces pounded their apartments with artillery and airstrikes.</p> <p>Food and water are almost finished, the woman said, with people “on the edge of hunger”. “All the provisions we brought with us are running out. Soon we won’t even have enough food for the children.”</p> <p>She added: “We are here and need help. We are at the epicentre of events and we can’t get out. My child needs to be evacuated to a peaceful area and others too. We beg for guarantees of safety for our kids.”</p> <p>The woman continued: “We worry for the lives of our children and [elderly] parents who require medical care. They are running out of strength and life power. There isn’t a single day without shelling. They are scared even to go to the toilet.”</p> <p>The Ukrainian government has been trying to establish a humanitarian corridor which would allow civilians inside the plant to safely exit. The sprawling factory is a base for Ukraine’s Azov battalion, a part of the national guard, which shot the video.</p> <p>Under cover of darkness, Ukrainian forces managed to deliver weapons to the encircled soldiers via helicopter, Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the national security and defence council said, adding: “We have a difficult situation, but our army is defending our state.”</p> <p>About 80 civilians escaped from Mariupol on Wednesday in four buses. Ukraine says subsequent attempts have failed because Russian troops keep shelling the meeting place. They add that Moscow has forcibly removed 40,000 residents to Russian territory.</p> <p>On Thursday, Putin declared victory in Mariupol. He said his forces, which control the rest of the city and have hoisted a flag on the TV tower, would not seek to enter the plant. They would instead seal it off so “not even a fly could escape”, he told his defence minister Sergei Shoigu.</p> <p>In reality, Moscow has resumed airstrikes and is trying to storm the steelworks, Ukraine’s presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said on Saturday. He told national TV: “The enemy is trying to strangle the final resistance of the defenders of Mariupol in the Azovstal area.”</p> <p>Russian units continue to hide evidence of their crimes by removing bodies from the city’s rubble, Ukrainian officials said. Satellite images show two new mass graves next to an existing cemetery in the village of Manhush, 15km west of Mariupol. Between 3,000 and 9,000 civilians are buried there, they suggest.</p> <p>Victims include civilians killed on 16 March when a Russian war plane flattened the city’s drama theatre. Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has said 300 people died in the strike. The theatre was being used as a shelter by about 1,500 women and children.</p>

Since failing to capture Kyiv, the Kremlin has amended its war plan. The current goal is to “liberate” the eastern Donbas region. On Friday, a Russian general said a second objective was to create a land corridor linking the separatist so-called Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics with Crimea and the breakaway republic of Transnistria in Moldova.

In its latest intelligence update, the UK Ministry of Defence said Russian tactical battalion groups, which have massed in and around Donbas, had made “no major gains in the last 24 hours”. “Ukrainian counterattacks continue to hinder the efforts,” it said.

Further north, the Ukrainian army clawed back some territory. It liberated three villages around the city of Kharkiv, according to regional governor Oleh Synehubov. Troops had secured positions in Bezruky, Slatine and Prudianka villages, he said.

Ukraine’s general staff said it had repelled eight Russian attacks, destroying nine tanks, 18 armoured units and 13 vehicles, a tanker and three artillery systems. “Units of Russian occupiers are regrouping. The enemy continues to launch missile and bomb strikes on military and civilian infrastructure,” it said.

The Luhansk governor, Serhiy Haidai, said on Saturday two people were killed by Russian shelling in the city of Popasna. He said an evacuation train for residents of the Donetsk and Luhansk areas was expected from the eastern city of Pokrovsk bound for the western city of Chop, near Ukraine’s border with Slovakia and Hungary.

“In addition to the fact that street fighting continues in the city for several weeks, the Russian army constantly fires at multi-storey residential buildings and private houses,” Haidai wrote on Instagram.

“Just yesterday, local residents withstood five enemy artillery attacks. Not all survived.”

Ukrainian authorities said that a series of Russian TU-95 missiles fired from the Caspian Sea on Saturday killed at least five people in Odesa, including a three-month-old baby, and wounded 18 others.

The air force’s southern command added that two missiles had also hit residential buildings in the city.

“Five Ukrainians killed and 18 wounded, and those are only the ones that we were able to find,” said the head of Ukraine’s presidential office, Andriy Yermak. “It is likely that the death toll will be heavy.”

In a press conference on Saturday evening, Zelenskiy confirmed that a three-month-old baby was among those killed. “They killed a three-month-old baby,” he said. “The war started when this baby was one month old. Can you even imagine what is happening? They are just bastards. Just bastards. I don’t have any other words to use in this context. They are just bastards.”

On another front, near Kherson, a city in the south of Ukraine under Russian military occupation, two Russian generals have been killed while another is in a critical condition, the Ukrainian ministry of defence’s intelligence directorate has said. The Russian generals were allegedly killed after the Ukrainian military hit the command post of Russia’s 49th army near Kherson on Friday, according to the statement.

Ukrainian authorities on Saturday urged those celebrating Orthodox Easter, one of the biggest celebrations in Ukraine, to follow religious services online and to respect curfews amid fighting with Russian troops, despite a holiday that usually attracts crowds.

Both Russia and Ukraine celebrate Orthodox Easter on Sunday, but hopes for a ceasefire faded on Saturday, with Ukrainian officials reporting the deadly strike on Odesa and fighting in the east.

“No crowds!”, said the governor of the Poltava region south-west of Kyiv, Dmytro Lunin, “There should not be situations where believers gather outside churches,” he said.

HEADLINE	04/23 Day 59 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-59-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-59-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has warned Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine is “only a beginning”</b> and that Moscow has designs on capturing other countries after a <a href="#">Russian general said it wants full control over southern Ukraine</a>. “All the nations that, like us, believe in the victory of life over death must fight with us. They must help us, because we are the first in line. And who will come next?” Zelenskiy said in a video address late on Friday.</li> <li>• <b>Rustam Minnekayev, the deputy commander of Russia’s central military district,</b> was quoted by Russian state news agencies as saying full control over southern Ukraine would <b>give it access to Transnistria, a breakaway Russian-occupied part of Moldova in the west.</b></li> <li>• <b>Moldova’s foreign ministry said it had summoned Moscow’s ambassador on Friday to express “deep concern” about the general’s comments.</b> Moldova was neutral, it said. Moldova last month formally applied to join the European Union, charting a pro-western course hastened by Russia’s invasion.</li> <li>• <b>Fears continue to grow for hundreds of civilians holed up in the Azovstal steel factory in the besieged port city of Mariupol, with the last remaining, outgunned contingent of Ukrainian fighters.</b> Russia’s defence ministry said it was ready to allow civilians to leave the steelworks if Ukrainian forces surrendered. But according to Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to Mariupol’s mayor, Russian forces are continuing to drop bombs on the plant.</li> <li>• <b>Another mass grave has been found outside of Mariupol,</b> the Associated Press has reported, citing the city council and an adviser to the mayor. The city council posted a satellite photo provided by Planet Labs showing what it said was a mass grave 45 metres by 25 metres that could hold the bodies of at least 1,000 Mariupol residents outside the village of Vynohradne.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine deputy prime minister, Iryna Vereshchuk, said that “there is a possibility” a humanitarian corridor could be opened up out of Mariupol on Saturday.</b> She was speaking in an online address to the people waiting to be evacuated.</li> <li>• <b>The stated intent of Russia’s defence minister, Sergei Shoigu, to “introduce ‘new methods of warfare’ is a tacit admission that Russian progress is not going as intended”,</b> the UK’s Ministry of Defence said in its latest intelligence update. The MoD said it would take Russia some time to change tactics and improve operations and therefore in the interim there is “likely to be continued reliance on bombardment as a means of trying to suppress Ukrainian opposition”.</li> <li>• <b>The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, has called for the release of prominent Russian opposition activist Vladimir Kara-Murza,</b> who was detained outside his home in Moscow on 11 April, hours after CNN aired an interview in which he criticised Russia’s actions in <a href="#">Ukraine</a>.</li> <li>• <b>The United Nations chief, António Guterres, will meet Putin in Moscow next week,</b> seeking an end to the bloodshed. Guterres could also visit Zelenskiy in Kyiv, the UN announced. Talks between Russia and Ukraine had stalled again, the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said on Friday.</li> <li>• <b>The US military expects more than 20 countries to attend Ukraine-focused defence talks</b> it will host in Germany next week that will focus in part on Kyiv’s long-term defence needs, the Pentagon said on Friday.</li> <li>• <b>Western allies are preparing to offer Ukraine a series of “security guarantees”</b> that should make the country “impregnable” to a future Russian invasion, the British prime minister, Boris Johnson, was reported saying by the Press Association.</li> <li>• Zelenskiy has said he is “grateful” to Britain after Johnson announced the <a href="#">reopening of the UK embassy in Kyiv</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Russia’s defence ministry has reported that one sailor died and 27 more remain missing after one of its premier warships, the missile cruiser Moskva, <a href="#">sank last week</a></b> in the Black Sea south of the threatened Ukrainian port of Odesa.</li> <li>• <b>Russia has been hiding evidence of its “barbaric” war crimes in Mariupol by burying the bodies of civilians killed by shelling in a new mass grave</b> that could hold as many as 9,000 dead, local officials said. It comes after <a href="#">a US satellite imaging company released photos that appeared to match the site</a>.</li> <li>• <b>The UN human rights office said it has seen growing evidence of war crimes in Ukraine, describing the war as a “horror story of violations against civilians”.</b> The UN human rights</li> </ul>



	commissioner, Michelle Bachelet, said “almost every resident” of the town of Bucha had a story about the death of a relative, a neighbour or even a stranger.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Taiwan: no lockdown like Shanghai</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/taiwan-wont-go-into-lockdown-like-shanghai-despite-covid-surge-premier-says">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/taiwan-wont-go-into-lockdown-like-shanghai-despite-covid-surge-premier-says</a>
GIST	<p>Taiwan will not go into a Shanghai-like lockdown to control a rise in Covid-19 cases as the vast majority of those infected have no symptoms or show only minor symptoms, the premier, Su Tseng-chang, has said.</p> <p>Taiwan has been dealing with a spike in local cases since the start of the year, but the numbers overall remain small – 18,436 since 1 January for a population of some 23 million – and just four people have died.</p> <p>Backed by a high vaccination rate, the government has been promoting the “new Taiwan model”, learning to gradually live with the virus and avoiding shutting down the economy, unlike in Shanghai, which is in <a href="#">its third week of a lockdown to control the pandemic</a>.</p> <p>On Saturday, local authorities in Shanghai reported that 12 people infected with Covid died in the city on Friday, up from 11 the previous day. China’s financial hub recorded 20,634 new local asymptomatic coronavirus cases on the day, compared with 15,698 a day earlier. Total new symptomatic cases reached 2,736, up from 1,931 on Thursday.</p> <p>Mainland China reported 24,411 new Covid cases on Friday, the country’s national health authority said on Saturday. The total number of cases was up from 18,598 a day earlier.</p> <p>In Taiwan, Su said the government was confident in the steps being taken and it was “fortunate” more than 99% of cases were either asymptomatic or had mild illness.</p> <p>“We will gradually deal with it and won’t be like Shanghai and go into lockdown, but we also won’t immediately stop wearing face masks and not take anti-pandemic measures,” he added.</p> <p>The government expects daily cases to reach 10,000 by the end of the month and has warned the peak is likely several weeks off.</p> <p>Su said more vaccines and rapid tests were on their way to help cope with the uptick in infections to “prepare for the next steps in reopening” and reduce the amount of time those with Covid or their contacts have to spend in quarantine.</p> <p>The government has already cut the quarantine for all arrivals in Taiwan from two weeks to 10 days and is considering further gradual reductions as it looks to reopen its borders.</p> <p>About 80% of Taiwan’s population is now double-vaccinated and almost 60% has had a first booster dose, while mask-wearing mandates remain in place.</p> <p>Taiwan has reported 47,100 infections since the pandemic began more than two years ago and 856 deaths.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Beijing braces for rise in Covid cases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/shanghai-blockade-of-covid-hit-buildings-sparks-fresh-outcry">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/shanghai-blockade-of-covid-hit-buildings-sparks-fresh-outcry</a>
GIST	Authorities in Beijing are on high alert for a surge in coronavirus cases amid a fresh outcry in Shanghai over buildings blockaded under China’s zero Covid policy.

The number of new cases in the capital rose by 22 on Sunday – all locally transmitted – compared with six the day before, according to official reports. Beijing authorities have so far not taken steps to lock down the capital, but they have ordered a number of gyms and after-school activity providers to suspend in-person classes.

Residents rushed to stockpile food amid rumours of tougher measures in the coming days.

Health official Pang Xinghuo said preliminary observations suggested Covid had been “spreading invisibly” within the capital for a week, affecting “schools, tour groups and many families”.

“The risk of continued and hidden transmission is high, and the situation is grim,” Tian Wei of Beijing’s municipal party committee told a press briefing. “The whole city of Beijing must act immediately.”

The outbreak in Beijing came as Mainland China’s most crucial financial hub, Shanghai, enters its fourth week of city-wide lockdown. Thirty-nine new deaths were reported on Sunday, compared with 12 the previous day and by far the most during the current outbreak.

#### **‘Hard isolation’**

As the situation did not seem to have improved following three weeks of stringent lockdown in Shanghai, desperate officials erected mesh barriers outside some residential buildings on Saturday. This move – described in the official directive “hard isolation” – sparked a fresh public outcry over a lockdown that has forced many of the city’s 25 million people to stay home.

Images of white hazmat suit-clad workers sealing entrances of housing blocks and even closing off entire streets with 2-metre-tall green fencing went viral on social media on Saturday, prompting questions and complaints from residents.

“Isn’t this a fire hazard?” said one user on the social media platform Weibo. “This is so disrespectful of the rights of the people inside, using metal barriers to enclose them like domestic animals,” said another.

A worker wearing protective equipment walks near a locked down neighbourhood after the detection of new cases of Covid-19 in the Huangpu district of Shanghai on 17 March 2022.

Most of the barriers appeared to have been erected around compounds designated as “sealed areas”, which are buildings where at least one person has tested positive for Covid and so its residents are forbidden from leaving their front doors.

The move from the local government, as some Shanghai residents pointed out, appeared to have contradicted an earlier advisory from China’s top legislative body that was issued during the first round of Covid outbreak in March 2020.

In that advisory, as was reported by state news agency, Xinhua, a spokesperson at the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress said that measures to enforce “hard isolation” were “illegal” and “unreasonable”.

The Shanghai government did not respond to a request for comment.

In the past three weeks, the lockdown in Shanghai has fuelled frustration over difficulties accessing food and medical care as well as over lost wages, family separation, conditions at quarantine centres and censorship of efforts to vent online.

It has also exacted a toll on the world’s second-largest economy, with factory efforts to resume production disrupted by snarled supply chains and difficulties faced by locked-down residents returning to work.

	<p>Authorities did not report any deaths from Covid during the first few weeks of its latest case surge, fuelling doubt among residents about the figures. It has since reported 87 fatalities from the virus, all in the past seven days.</p> <p>New case numbers fell slightly for Saturday, but remained in the tens of thousands. Shanghai recorded 19,657 new local asymptomatic cases, down from 20,634 a day earlier, and 1,401 symptomatic cases, down from 2,736.</p> <p>Nationwide, China reported 20,285 new asymptomatic coronavirus cases for Saturday, down from 21,423 a day earlier, with 1,580 symptomatic cases, down from 2,988.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 France: Russia mercenaries staged atrocity</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/22/france-says-russian-wagner-mercenaries-staged-french-atrocity-in-mali">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/22/france-says-russian-wagner-mercenaries-staged-french-atrocity-in-mali</a>
GIST	<p>Russian mercenaries buried bodies near a Malian military base to falsely accuse France's departing forces of leaving behind mass graves, the French military has claimed.</p> <p>The French army said it used a drone to film what appeared to be white soldiers covering bodies with sand near the Gossi base in northern Mali.</p> <p>The video was shown to reporters from Agence France Presse on Thursday after a Twitter account using the name Dia Diarra, who describes himself as a "former soldier" and "Malian patriot", posted pixelated images of corpses buried in sand and accused France of atrocities.</p> <p>"This is what the French left behind them when they left the base in Gossi ... We cannot keep silent!" the account wrote.</p> <p>France's general staff called the Twitter video an "information attack" and said the profile was "very probably a fake account created by Wagner", a private Russian mercenary group which arrived in Mali late last year to reinforce local troops' faltering efforts against Islamist extremists there.</p> <p>France's army said comparing the photos published on Twitter against images taken by a special sensor allows them to "draw a direct line" between Wagner's activities and what has been falsely attributed to French soldiers.</p> <p>"This manoeuvre [is] to discredit the [Operation] Barkhane force. It seems coordinated. It is representative of multiple information attacks French soldiers have faced for several months," it said.</p> <p>France, the US and others have <a href="#">accused Wagner mercenaries of widespread human rights abuses in Mali</a> as Paris winds down its almost decade-long military operation in the west African country.</p> <p>More than 500 Russian fighters are now believed to be in Mali, mounting joint patrols on the porous frontiers and leading military operations against Islamist extremists in the central zone where the UN also operates.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Wagner was accused of leading <a href="#">an attack on the village of Moura in central Mali</a> during which more than 300 men were executed – mostly civilians, according to witnesses, community leaders and human rights organisations.</p> <p>Multiple sources said the dozens of white soldiers who accompanied local forces on the operation were Russian.</p> <p>Mali's military-dominated government has denied the accusations, saying that only hardened extremists were killed, and said the Russians in the country are military instructors.</p>

France officially handed control of the Gossi base to the Malian army on Tuesday as part of its withdrawal [announced in February](#).

The French general staff warned about information warfare after the pullout from the base, which hosted 300 French soldiers.

Anti-French sentiment has grown in west [Africa](#), where French forces have operated since 2013. Social media has emerged as a key battleground across the region.

In October 2019, Facebook [took down three networks of accounts](#) linked to the Russian businessman who owns the Wagner group. The accounts were actively seeking to influence the domestic politics in eight countries in Africa. In 2020, Facebook targeted [a second Russian-led network of professional trolls](#) outsourced to Ghanaian and Nigerian operatives. More recently, [pro-Russian Facebook pages in Mali](#) coordinated support for anti-democracy protests and the Wagner group.

Mali's under-equipped army has also often been accused of committing abuses during the conflict and António Guterres, the UN secretary general, recently warned the UN security council that counter-terrorism efforts in the country had "disastrous consequences for the civilian population".

A military spokesperson said Mali's army was guided by human rights and international law, and called for "restraint against defamatory speculations".

Several French TV and radio networks have been blocked by authorities in Bamako after reporting details of the Moura massacre.

On Thursday, Mali's military rulers said they would comply with a demand from regional body ECOWAS to hold free and fair democratic elections within two years.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Lockdowns risk stalling China economy</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/apr/23/china-covid-lockdown-shanghai-economy">https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/apr/23/china-covid-lockdown-shanghai-economy</a>
GIST	<p>Veteran lorry driver Meng Hong has become an unlikely social media star in recent weeks. Since March, his short video talks about life on the road during Covid outbreaks on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, have won him millions of likes.</p> <p>Most of Meng's videos had been about "spreading positive energy" as he wrote in his account description. But on 13 April, he began to complain about what happened when drivers transported goods to Shanghai. "After we have delivered food, we were quarantined [after we left] or locked down in Shanghai," he revealed in an <a href="#">animated video tirade</a>.</p> <p>As China's most populous city entered a strict lockdown this month, local governments in neighbouring areas erected roadblocks and closed highways to curb potential spread of Omicron, <a href="#">leaving logistics chains woefully disrupted</a>. "As long as you have had a trip to Shanghai, very few other cities would allow you to enter," Meng complained. Drivers were now refusing to go there, he reported.</p> <p>The post resonated across <a href="#">China</a> and is a microcosm of the uncertainty the world's second-largest economy is facing right now. The ruling party's zero-Covid policy has so far resulted in at least 45 cities experiencing some form of lockdown, and Beijing shows no sign of changing course on its effort to eliminate the spread of the virus.</p> <p><b>'Companies need signs of stability'</b></p> <p>Last Sunday, inhabitants in the six urban districts in Wuhu, a city of 3.6 million in eastern Anhui province, woke up to a sudden lockdown after one student at a school tested positive the previous day. The officials say they operate on a three-word principle in tackling this kind of situation: fast, precise and tough.</p>

But the unpredictable nature of such a practice has inevitably led to economic losses as lockdowns have affected 50% of China's total output, according to local economists.

Chinese and foreign firms have been equally affected. According to a [recent survey by the German Chamber of Commerce](#) in China, only about 7% of German firms surveyed reported no impact in their Chinese business operations as a result of Covid-19. And factoring in the geopolitical tensions, one-third of the respondents said they were putting planned business or investments in the country "on hold".

"What companies need now are signs of stability," the chamber said in a recent report that also urged leaders at the European Union to raise their concerns with Chinese decision makers. "Being in the middle of the current Covid-19 wave in China, the German business community strongly needs an indication of the direction of the government's Covid-strategy, to minimise the severe impact on business operations and supply chains."

#### **'Growth recession' warning**

Beijing set its annual GDP growth target last month at "around 5.5%", but this is looking increasingly like a tall order, economists say. In the past week, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) slashed its forecast for the world's second-largest economy this year to 4.4% as China begins to feel the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as well as the lockdowns.

On Thursday, Nomura went further, cutting its forecast of China's annual growth from 4.3% to 3.9% this year. With no relaxation of the severe containment strategy in sight, the Japanese firm said its baseline estimate is that China's second-quarter growth would only expand by 1.8%.

Consumption and net exports are two drivers of China's economic growth, said Mary Lovely, head of the China programme at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington DC. "[But] when we look at those two drivers going forward, we see some serious danger signs," she said, warning that China could experience a "growth recession" in the current quarter. A "growth recession" refers to an economy at slow growth but with rising unemployment.

Delivering economic growth has always been crucial to the legitimacy of China's ruling communist party. This is particularly the case in 2022 as the five-yearly party congress is to be held in the autumn. President Xi Jinping is expected to continue his rule, in an extraordinary break with previous norms.

Stability – politically as well as economically – is key to Beijing's rulers. But lockdowns, risk of disease, and uncertainty are dampening consumption and investment that could create jobs, Lovely added.

According to China's own data released this week, the economy has been experiencing headwinds since last month, when Omicron began to spread. The unemployment rate in 31 major Chinese cities reached 6% in March, a record high. Among those aged 16 to 24, joblessness hit 16%, reaching the highest level in eight months.

Particularly among younger workers, unemployment is a matter of deep concern to the authorities as it fuels social discontent, said Lovely. "It also means lost experience for these future workers, and lower lifetime productivity and earnings. Training young people is necessary for China to continue to maintain healthy growth as the population ages."

But there is a bigger worry for Beijing. Last week, the IMF boss, Kristalina Georgieva, warned that China's consumption is falling short. "Rather than moving money into public investments, move it into the pockets of people, so there is more dynamism coming from a consumption boom," she suggested.

For a long time, China has tried to build a consumption-driven economy. But economic data suggests China has yet to see a meaningful recovery in real household income growth since the first round of the pandemic in 2020, said Jinny Yan, chief China economist at ICBC Standard Bank. "This is now

	<p>exacerbated by local lockdowns because physically people cannot go out to consume, and March retail sales data shows that even online sales have been hit hard by supply chain and logistical disruptions.”</p> <p>There’s no easy way out of the current zero Covid policy dilemma, Yan said. This means that consumer confidence would be expected to continue to weaken even with monetary and fiscal support. Additionally, structural issues in the Chinese economy still linger.</p> <p>“So there’s no silver bullet. Even if the current zero Covid policy would be eased, a high prevalence of Covid cases will still impact economic activity.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 US warns Solomon Islands over China base</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/us-warns-solomon-islands-against-china-military-base-as-australian-mps-trade-blame">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/us-warns-solomon-islands-against-china-military-base-as-australian-mps-trade-blame</a>
GIST	<p>The US government has warned <a href="#">Solomon Islands</a> it will “respond accordingly” if its security agreement with China leads to a Chinese military presence in the Pacific island nation.</p> <p>A visiting US delegation including Indo-Pacific security adviser Kurt Campbell delivered the message to the Solomon Islands prime minister, Manasseh Sogavare, directly, the White House said, as fallout over the agreement continued to dominate the Australian federal election campaign.</p> <p>Details of the agreement have not been made public. But according to a draft version of the deal, it would allow armed Chinese police to be deployed at Solomon Islands’ request to maintain “social order”. It would also allow <a href="#">China</a> to “make ship visits to, carry out logistical replenishment in, and have stopover and transition in Solomon Islands”, and Chinese forces could also be used “to protect the safety of Chinese personnel and major projects in Solomon Islands”.</p> <p>In a statement, the Biden administration said Sogavare assured the US there would be no long-term Chinese presence on the islands. But the US would nevertheless “follow developments closely in consultation with regional partners”.</p> <p>“Solomon Islands representatives indicated that the agreement had solely domestic applications but the US delegation noted there are potential regional security implications of the accord, including for the United States and its allies and partners,” the White House said in a statement.</p> <p>“The US delegation outlined clear areas of concern with respect to the purpose, scope and transparency of the agreement.</p> <p>“If steps are taken to establish a de facto permanent military presence, power-projection capabilities, or a military installation, the delegation noted that the United States would then have significant concerns and respond accordingly.”</p> <p>The White House also committed to expedite <a href="#">the reopening of its embassy in Honiara</a>.</p> <p>On Saturday morning the Australian treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, refused to be drawn on when the government became aware of the agreement.</p> <p>It had been reported by the Nine newspapers earlier this week that Australian intelligence agencies first became aware in March, and played a role in leaking the draft of the agreement online.</p> <p>But the failure of the Morrison government to prevent the deal has been described by the opposition Labor party as the most significant foreign policy failure in the Pacific since the second world war.</p>



Frydenberg would not say when Australia first knew of the pact between the Solomon Islands and China, saying instead that “we’ve known that this was always a risk”, adding that “we’ve known that there were discussions under way”.

He also told Weekend Sunrise that the government could do little more to assist Solomon Islands, describing its existing aid as a “full court press”.

The Coalition government continued to try and use the issue to paint Labor as soft on China, with Frydenberg describing a speech by Labor’s deputy leader, Richard Marles, in 2019 as the “biggest story” of the day.

Marles – who was campaigning alongside Jim Chalmers in Brisbane due to Labor leader Anthony Albanese’s infection with Covid – confirmed reports he had shown Chinese government officials a copy of a speech he gave at a Beijing university in 2019.

“I made a speech in China where I criticised China and I wanted to make sure that the Chinese government were not at all surprised with what I was going to say,” Marles said.

“The assertion made by the government is another desperate attempt to divert from their failings in the Pacific.”

Senior Labor MP Tanya Plibersek said on Saturday morning that Solomon Islands’ security pact followed “years of neglect” by the Australian government.

Asked what Labor would have done differently from the Coalition, she said: “We wouldn’t have trashed the relationship with our Pacific neighbours in the first place.

“It is inexplicable that, having been warned about this, [prime minister] Scott Morrison didn’t say to his foreign minister, Marise Payne, I want you on the first plane to the Solomon Islands to talk this through.”

The reaction to the deal in the Solomons has been mixed.

Peter Kenilorea, the chair of the Solomon Islands’ parliament’s foreign relations committee and an opposition MP, described the agreement as only benefiting China.

During a forum hosted this week, Kenilorea also questioned Sogavare’s contention that his government was entitled to reach the agreement as it was a sovereign decision.

“I don’t think is a path we should take or that it is a path would benefit Solomon Islands,” he said. “I think the biggest winner here will be the People’s Republic of China, in terms of a foothold in the Pacific region.”

He went on to say that “when it comes to security, especially in this heightened geopolitical environment, it is more than a national issue ... the region is impacted, there are implications”.

Another participant in [the forum](#), leading Solomon Islands academic Dr Transform Aqorau, said it was concerning that no one outside the government had seen a copy of the signed agreement or been provided with any detail of its content, but said he did not see anything wrong with an agreement that bolstered the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF).

But former Solomon Islands prime minister and current MP Danny Philip [told the same forum](#) that the agreement would help ensure Chinese assets were protected in the country, after Australian security forces that were deployed there failed to do so. His claims were rejected by Australian authorities.

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/22/arizona-tunnel-fire-wildfire-new-mexico">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/22/arizona-tunnel-fire-wildfire-new-mexico</a>
GIST	<p>Firefighters working to keep more homes from burning on the edge of a mountain town in northern Arizona were treated to scattered showers and cooler temperatures early on Friday, but the favorable weather was not expected to last as more ferocious winds were forecast to batter parts of Arizona and all of New Mexico through the weekend.</p> <p>The combination of high winds, warmer temperatures and extremely dry conditions will make for an atmosphere that's "pretty much on steroids", said Scott Overpeck, with the National Weather Service in Albuquerque, New Mexico.</p> <p>"This is not typical," he said, looking ahead to what could be explosive fire growth on Friday. "This is really one of those days we need to be on our toes and we need to be ready."</p> <p>The weather conditions will complicate the firefight on a half-dozen large wildfires burning in the American south-west.</p> <p>In <a href="#">Arizona</a>, the flames stretching 100ft (30 meters) raced through rural neighborhoods near Flagstaff this week.</p> <p>The <a href="#">fast-moving flames of the Tunnel fire</a> have forced evacuations of at least 765 homes since the blaze broke out on Sunday. Authorities said on Thursday that at least 30 homes and numerous other buildings had been destroyed, with sheriff's deputies saying more than 100 properties were affected.</p> <p>By Friday morning, the more than 21,000-acre fire was just 3% contained, and Dick Fleishman, an information officer, said firefighters were concerned defense lines might not keep the fire in check during strong winds.</p> <p>In New Mexico, firefighters are battling a blaze north-east of Santa Fe. At least one airtanker was able to join the fight against the flames on Thursday, but weather conditions would make its deployment impossible on Friday, officials said.</p> <p>Fire managers said that without air support and no crews working directly on the fire lines due to the weather, explosive growth was expected.</p> <p>"It's definitely lining up to be a very dangerous situation," the San Miguel county sheriff, Chris Lopez, said during a community meeting on Thursday night, pleading with residents to take the evacuation orders seriously.</p> <p>Authorities on Friday morning started evacuating several tiny communities in the valleys north-east of the fire as officials expected it to overtake some of those areas by the end of the day. They said flames could spread as much as 13 miles (20km) in that direction. Several roads in the area were also closed.</p> <p>Wildfire has become a year-round threat in the west given changing conditions that include earlier snowmelt and rain coming later in the fall, scientists have said. The problems have been exacerbated by decades of fire suppression and poor management along with a more than 20-year megadrought that studies link to human-caused climate breakdown.</p> <p>Colorado saw one of its most destructive wildfires last winter, when flames tore through two densely populated Denver suburbs. While crews in that state got a handle this week on two small wildfires, Jared Polis, the Colorado governor, was scheduled on Friday to talk about the continuing danger and how state officials planned to deal with what was expected to be a significant fire season.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Wildfires sweep through New Mexico</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/24/thousands-forced-to-flee-as-wildfires-sweep-through-new-mexico">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/24/thousands-forced-to-flee-as-wildfires-sweep-through-new-mexico</a>
GIST	<p>Wind-driven wildfires destroyed hundreds of structures in northern New Mexico and forced thousands to flee mountain villages as blazes burned unusually early in the year in the parched US south-west.</p> <p>Two wildfires merged north-west of Las Vegas, New Mexico, and raced through 15 miles (24km) of forest driven by winds over 75mph (121km/h), destroying more than 200 buildings, state authorities said.</p> <p>To the north-east, a fire about 35 miles east of Taos doubled in size to become the largest burning in the United States, forcing the evacuation of a scout ranch and threatening several villages.</p> <p>The wildfires are the most severe of nearly two dozen in the US south-west and raised concerns the region was in for a brutal fire year as a decades-long drought combined with abundant dry vegetation.</p> <p>By Saturday, five counties in New Mexico were under a state of emergency after the governor, Michelle Lujan Grisham, issued one for Mora county. She had declared states of emergency for Colfax, Lincoln, San Miguel and Valencia counties on Friday.</p> <p>“We have a longer, more dangerous and more dramatic fire season ahead of us,” Lujan Grisham told reporters, adding that the state had 20 active fires following Friday’s “unprecedented” wind storm.</p> <p>Winds and temperatures in New Mexico diminished on Saturday but remained strong enough to still fan fires, and dozens of evacuation orders remained in place.</p> <p>Over 200 structures have burned, Lujan Grisham said, not providing specifics on locations or the numbers of homes included in that count.</p> <p>She appealed to residents to refrain from using fireworks or burning trash and to evacuate when fire warnings are issued. “You need to leave. The risks are too great,” she said.</p> <p>The Calf Canyon and Hermits Peak fires near Las Vegas combined to burn 42,341 acres (171 sq km), an area larger than Florida’s Disney World. Evacuations expanded to half a dozen more communities, including the village of Mora, the governor said.</p> <p>Climate change has lowered winter snowpacks and allowed larger and more extreme fires to start earlier in the year, according to scientists.</p> <p>East of Taos, the Cooks Peak fire nearly doubled in size to 48,672 acres, forcing the evacuation of the Philmont Scout Ranch and threatening the village of Cimarron.</p> <p>New Mexico as of Saturday had the most major wildfires burning of any state, though neighbouring Arizona also had large fires, where flames stretching 100ft (30 meters) <a href="#">raced through rural neighbourhoods near Flagstaff this week</a>.</p> <p>Elsewhere in the region, the fire danger in the Denver area on Friday was the highest it had been in over a decade, according to the National Weather Service, because of unseasonable temperatures in the 80s (26C-32C) combined with strong winds and very dry conditions.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 USSR reappears in Russia controlled cities</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/back-in-the-ussr-lenin-statues-and-soviet-flags-reappear-in-russian-controlled-cities">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/back-in-the-ussr-lenin-statues-and-soviet-flags-reappear-in-russian-controlled-cities</a>
GIST	Last week a familiar figure returned to the main square of the seaside town of Henichesk. Dressed in a three-piece suit, and sporting his familiar goatee and moustache, Vladimir Lenin was back on his pedestal.

A statue of the Bolshevik leader had been erected outside the town's main council building. Flying from the roof were the Russian and Soviet flags. All in time for Lenin's 152nd birthday on Friday.

Henichesk, however, is not in Russia. It is – or was, until Vladimir Putin's invasion – a sleepy settlement in southern [Ukraine](#). The town of 20,000 people has a house of culture, a long strip of beach and a Vegas-themed hotel. It also has new imperial masters: Russians. They arrived from Crimea on 24 February in armoured vehicles, rolling past a shimmering landscape of lagoons and dunes.

One woman was unimpressed "What the fuck are you doing here?" she asked an enemy soldier, in an exchange filmed on a phone. "You're occupiers! You're fascists! You came to my land uninvited." She then tried to hand him a packet of seeds. "These are so sunflowers will grow when you all lie down here. From this moment you are cursed! You are a piece of shit!"

Despite the wishes of its residents, Henichesk may soon become part of a so-called "People's Republic of Kherson". According to Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, Moscow is planning to hold a sham independence referendum in the southern *oblast*, or province, possibly as early as Wednesday. Grateful local voters will express their desire to "break away" from Ukraine.

That, at least, is the script. It is a model Moscow last used in 2014, when it instigated and armed a pro-Russia separatist rebellion in the eastern Donbas region. It staged pseudo-votes in the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk, both of which became "people's republics". The Russian army is now seeking to grab further Ukrainian territory and to expand the "republics".

Putin's fuzzy war aims [evolved last week](#) after his unsuccessful attempt to seize Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. There is now little talk of his original objective: to "de-Nazify" and to "de-militarise" Ukraine and its leadership. Instead, Russian generals speak openly about conquest. The invasion has become a grandiose colonial project to reshape Europe's map and to steal Ukraine's coast.

The new apparent goal is to [create a land corridor stretching from the separatist east along the sea of Azov to Crimea](#). This would include the Black Sea ports of Odesa and Mykolaiv, future targets once the battle for Donbas is won. The corridor would link up with Transnistria, a breakaway Soviet-style territory in Moldova that is already home to Russian "peacekeepers".

In the meantime, the Kremlin is consolidating control in Henichesk and other southern areas. Its tactics are intimidation, and co-option for those willing to serve Russian interests. Ukrainian officials, activists and journalists are being arrested. Some disappear. In the city of Kakhovka hostages are beaten and tortured with electric shocks in a police station, according to Ukraine's human rights ombudsman.

The new authorities have shut down independent media outlets and turned off Ukrainian TV. They have switched on Russian propaganda channels broadcasting from Crimea. The message: life has improved with the arrival of Russian forces. "We are in an information vacuum," one resident said. She added that there was no internet for week-long periods.

Meanwhile, a purge of Ukrainian politicians is under way. The mayor of Henichesk, Oleksandr Tulupov, was last seen on 9 March. He and his colleagues posed for a photo in the town park next to a statue of Taras Shevchenko, Ukraine's national poet. It was Shevchenko's birthday. It is unclear if the mayor has shared the fate of other elected officials who have been abducted.

Last month, the Russians hacked Henichesk's municipal website and announced Tulupov had voluntarily "resigned". They replaced him with a new mayor, Gennady Sivak, who had lived in annexed Crimea for eight years. In the occupied city of Kherson, Moscow appointed as mayor a Russian deputy from Putin's ruling United Russia party, Igor Kastsyukevich.

Residents told the *Observer* there had been a full-blown campaign to erase Ukraine's national identity.

Ukrainian flags have been ripped from civic buildings. In Melitopol teachers are being forced to use Russian and to teach the Kremlin's school curriculum. The authorities have said some may need to be "retrained" in Crimea. Russian "military police" units have destroyed Ukrainian literature and textbooks.

The historian [Anne Applebaum](#) said the Russian government's methods in Ukraine were darkly familiar. Today's Moscow is replicating what Soviet forces did in occupied Poland, the Baltic states and the rest of central Europe in 1939, as well as at the end of the second world war. It was an "eerily precise repeat of the NKVD [Soviet secret police] and Red Army's behaviour," she said.

She added: "They have lists of people to arrest – mayors, museum directors, local leaders of all kinds. They systematically rape and murder civilians, in order to create terror. They deport other people en masse to Russia, to enhance their own depleted population. They eradicate local symbols – statues, flags, monuments – and put up their own."

Applebaum said there was "one new twist" in Russia's takeover of southern and eastern Ukraine, now the scene of a brutal battle for the Donbas. "Because modern Russia stands for nothing except corruption, nihilism, and Putin's personal power, they have brought back Soviet flags as well as Lenin statues to symbolise Russian victory," she said.

Ukraine removed its Lenin statues in 2014, in the wake of the Maidan revolution. Monuments vanished from squares in Kharkiv, Kyiv and elsewhere. Communist slogans were banned under "decommunisation" laws passed by Ukraine's parliament. Henichesk and other occupied areas are now seeing forced "recommunisation". Or, put another way, they are going back to the USSR.

Yurii Sobolevskyi, a first deputy chairman in Kherson's regional council, said the Russian "orcs" were putting up communist-era memorials and "moving to the past". This was taking place against the backdrop of a worsening humanitarian crisis, the strict suppression of dissent and a clampdown on anyone who expressed a pro-Ukrainian political stance, he said.

He added: "Their motive is absolutely transparent. They try to parasite on the nostalgic sentiments of the population. The problem is that these almost don't exist in the [Kherson] area. Our people live in the present and have a very real and successful future. But the occupiers don't understand. Therefore, the 'USSR show' will go on until Ukraine's armed forces liberate our territory."

Marina – a woman living in the occupied southern port of Berdyansk – said the city's new overlords were planning to stage a Red Square-style victory parade on 9 May. "It's like a terrible dream. I was a pioneer and in the Komsomol [communist youth organisation]. I don't miss Lenin," she said. "It's the same scenario here as in the Donbas eight years ago. They've come up with nothing new."

Within hours of arriving, the Russians had seized the local TV station and taken over its newspaper, she said. They raided the passport office and stole personal data. Soldiers demanded documents at checkpoints. Russian armoured vehicles marked with a Z drove past regularly, she added. Food was available, but Berdyansk was practically out of medicine. Humanitarian deliveries from Ukrainian-controlled areas had ceased.

Most southern residents opposed Russia's takeover, she said. Nonetheless, the Kremlin has found some locals willing to collaborate. The new "mayor" of Mariupol is a veteran politician from the pro-Russian Opposition Bloc party. Vadym Boichenko, the real mayor, said his counterpart had advised the Russians which infrastructure targets to shell.

Collaboration, however, can be dangerous. On Wednesday, Valery Kuleshov, a pro-Russian activist and blogger, was shot dead in Kherson. He had left his apartment block at 8.15am and climbed into his grey Mazda. It's unclear who raked the front of his car with automatic gunfire. Valery Kim, the mayor of Mykolaiv, said it was impossible to stop patriotic citizens from taking out "traitors".

For now, residents can attempt to travel from Russian zones into Ukrainian-controlled territory. There is no guarantee they will escape. Yulia – a woman from Berdyansk – said soldiers took her uncle from his car and threatened to shoot him in the knee. “They said he was a Nazi,” she said. The doctor husband of a friend of hers was taken away at a checkpoint, she added, and disappeared.

Yulia said the popular “mood was against Russia”. This was especially true among younger people. She conceded, though, that Russian TV was beginning to have an effect on pensioners who grew up in the Soviet Union. “My husband’s grandfather told us the Russians weren’t bombing Kharkiv. He watched Russian news. It was difficult to convince him this was a lie,” she said.

It seems the Kremlin is not planning to leave southern Ukraine any time soon. A new stamp being used by Berdyansk’s “military-civilian administration” says the port is part of “Russia”. There are plans to replace the Ukrainian currency, the hryvnia, with the rouble – and, ominously, to forcibly conscript men to fight on the Russian side against Ukraine’s army.

In his latest video address, President Zelenskiy urged residents in occupied areas to “cause trouble” and said they should not take part in Moscow’s voting “show”. Initially hundreds of pro-Ukrainian protesters took to the streets of Kherson, waving blue and yellow flags. One man stood in front of a tank. Acts of resistance continue. In Melitopol a passer-by tore down a Russian flag.

More recently Russian soldiers have violently dispersed rallies with teargas and live rounds. The protests have become fewer. It is only a matter of time before the “green corridors” allowing locals to flee occupation are closed down. The Russian army has reportedly mined the main road leading north of Kherson, to prevent a Ukrainian counter-attack.

Back in Henichesk, the Lenin statue looks set to stay. His unlikely comeback speaks to the ideological vacancy at the heart of Putin’s imperial project on the borderlands of Europe. In an essay last summer, Russia’s president blamed Lenin and his associates for creating Ukraine by making it in 1922 an autonomous socialist republic – an act which deprived Russia, he said, of its “historical lands”.

“They don’t understand what they are doing,” Marina from Berdyansk said of her Russian occupiers. “Our local chats were flooded with an invitation to a cultural event celebrating Lenin’s birthday. We didn’t go.”

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HEADLINE	04/24 Day 60 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-60-of-the-russian-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-60-of-the-russian-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and defence secretary, Lloyd Austin, will travel to Kyiv to meet the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, on Sunday.</b> It will be the first high-level US trip to the city since the war began on 24 February.</li><li>• <a href="#">Zelenskiy, at a press conference on Saturday</a> held in an underground metro station, said <b>Ukraine will ask the US for more heavy weapons to defeat Russia.</b> “As soon as we have [more weapons], as soon as there are enough of them, believe me, we will immediately retake this or that territory, which is temporarily occupied,” Zelenskyy said.</li><li>• Ukraine’s president also spoke at length about <b>possible peace negotiations with Russia</b>, saying if Moscow kills any <b>Mariupol defenders</b> – or goes forward with the independence referendum in the partly occupied southern regions of <b>Kherson</b> and <b>Zaporizhzhia</b> – <b>Ukraine will suspend peace negotiations with Moscow.</b></li><li>• <b>In attacks on the eve of Orthodox Easter, Russian forces pounded cities and towns in southern and eastern Ukraine.</b> A three-month-old baby was among eight people killed when Russia fired cruise missiles at the <b>Black Sea port city of Odesa</b>, officials said. Eighteen more were wounded.</li><li>• <b>Separate strikes in Girske</b>, a village in the eastern Lugansk region, <b>killed six civilians</b>, the region’s governor, Sergiy Gayday, said.</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two Russian generals were killed near Kherson</b>, the Ukrainian ministry of defence said in a statement. Another is in critical condition. The Ukrainian military on Friday hit the command post of Russia's 49th army near the occupied regional capital, the ministry said.</li> <li>• <b>The fate of the Ukrainians in the sprawling and besieged steel mill in Mariupol wasn't immediately clear.</b> Earlier Saturday, a Ukrainian military unit released a video reportedly taken two days earlier in which <a href="#">women and children holed up underground</a>, some for as long as two months, said they longed to see the sun.</li> <li>• <b>Another attempt to evacuate women, children and older adults from Mariupol failed on Saturday.</b> Petro Andryushchenko, an adviser to Mariupol's mayor, said Russian forces did not allow Ukrainian-organised buses to take residents to Zaporizhzhia, a city 227km (141 miles) to the north-west.</li> <li>• The US-based <b>Institute for the Study of War</b> has released its latest analysis, warning that <b>Russian forces will likely increase the scale of ground offensive operations</b> in the coming days. It predicts that Russia will likely continue attacking south-east from Izyum, west from Kreminna and Popasna, and north from Donetsk via Avdiivka or another axis. Russian forces will attempt to starve out the remaining defenders of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol and will not allow trapped civilians to evacuate, it adds.</li> <li>• <b>Satellite images released this week showed what appeared to be two recently excavated mass grave sites next to cemeteries in two towns near Mariupol</b>, and local officials accused Russia of burying thousands of civilians to conceal the slaughter taking place there. The Kremlin has not commented on the images.</li> <li>• <b>Russia said it took control of several villages elsewhere in the eastern Donbas region</b> and destroyed 11 Ukrainian military targets on Saturday, including three artillery warehouses. Russian attacks also struck populated areas.</li> <li>• The <b>UK Ministry of Defence</b> released an intelligence update detailing accusations that <b>Russia</b> is planning to <b>conscript</b> Ukrainian civilians in the <b>Kherson and Zaporizhzhia</b> regions.</li> <li>• <b>Nearly 5.2 million people have fled Ukraine due to the war.</b> The number of Ukrainians leaving the country since Russia's invasion is now 5,163,686, the UN refugee agency says.</li> <li>• <b>A third of Russian gas exported to the European Union could be affected because of the war</b>, says the head of Ukraine's state gas company Naftogaz.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Studies: masks reduce Covid spread</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/how-we-know-that-masks-even-the-cloth-ones-reduce-the-spread-of-covid-19/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/how-we-know-that-masks-even-the-cloth-ones-reduce-the-spread-of-covid-19/</a>
GIST	<p>PHILADELPHIA — Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the public debate on masks is as heated as ever — especially in Philadelphia, which earned national attention <a href="#">for once again requiring masks in indoor public spaces</a> and then <a href="#">undoing that rule days later</a>.</p> <p>Yet in the realm of science, there is plenty of evidence to support using the face coverings. Researchers who study airborne transmission of viruses say there is no question that masks — even the cloth variety — reduce the spread of the coronavirus.</p> <p>Exactly how much depends on the type of material, how well the mask fits, and how many virus particles an infected person is shedding, among other factors. No mask is bulletproof, but that's not a reason to reject them entirely. No infection-control measure is absolute, short of complete isolation.</p> <p>That's why public health officials have stressed multiple layers of protection: masks, social distancing, and, above all, vaccines. If one layer fails, another may do the trick.</p> <p>Some physicians have questioned whether a universal mask requirement is appropriate at this stage of the pandemic, for reasons we'll get to below. But that question might be harder to answer, at least by science alone.</p> <p><b>How scientists study masks</b></p>

The evidence for wearing masks comes from three types of studies, says Seema Lakdawala, a scientist at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine who studies the airborne transmission of viruses.

Some researchers have placed infected and uninfected animals in cages, separating them with various materials to determine how well each blocks the spread of disease.

Others have opted for mannequins — masked models of human heads. In one such study, breathing was simulated by [connecting the heads to nebulizers and ventilators](#).

As for studies in live humans, researchers generally do not expose people to the coronavirus on purpose, as it can have severe consequences. Instead, the human evidence for masks comes mostly from the real world, by comparing rates of disease in masked and unmasked populations.

### **What the evidence shows**

Collectively, these studies leave little room for doubt, says Lakdawala, who coauthored [a Science magazine review of airborne virus transmission](#).

Masks reduce the flow of virus particles in both directions, when exhaled and inhaled.

Medical-grade N95 masks, so named because they filter at least 95% of particles, are the most effective. KN95 face coverings are in the same league, though be sure to check the rating label to avoid counterfeits.

Surgical masks don't work quite as well, and cloth masks are the least effective. [One study suggests](#) that fabric masks block about half of virus-laden "aerosols," though the rate varies with the size of these particles. Two layers are better than one.

Even blocking half of particles is a lot better than nothing, said Lakdawala, an associate professor in Pitt's department of microbiology and molecular genetics. That's because the immune system's response to viruses is a numbers game.

Reducing the amount of virus exposure gives the immune system time to marshal its various defenses before the virus makes enough copies of itself to cause severe illness. Even if a masked person becomes infected, the disease is more likely to be mild, she said.

That's especially true when the mask is coupled with other layers of protection, such as a vaccine.

"Anything you can do to diminish the amount of virus you're breathing in is going to be helpful to reduce the risk," she said.

### **How do masks work, given that viruses are smaller than the holes in the fabric?**

A common misconception about masks is that they can't block viruses because the infectious particles are smaller than the "pores" in woven fabric. Wrong, says Lakdawala.

First off, viruses are carried inside larger particles of mucus or saliva. Some are large enough to be visible, and are easily intercepted by the fibers in a mask. Most are too small to see, yet even those can be blocked if they run straight into the fibers.

But masks block viruses in other ways besides direct interception, and it doesn't matter that the particles are smaller than the pores in masks.

"They're not like a colander," she said.

Other molecular processes enable masks to trap even the smallest virus-laden particles, such as electrostatic charges in the mask material and the fabric's ability to disrupt airflow.

### **Masks in the real world**

These microscopic phenomena can be studied in a laboratory, where researchers can control factors such as airflow and the amount of virus. But what about studying masks amid the chaos of the real world?

Time to call the epidemiologist.

In one of the most recent such studies, researchers enlisted more than 1,800 California residents who were tested for COVID at some point between mid-February 2021 and the end of that year. All were asked how often they'd worn masks during the two weeks prior to testing.

Those who said they always wore a mask in indoor public places were 56% less likely to test positive than those who said they never wore one, the authors [reported in Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#), a CDC journal.

Among those who specified wearing an N95 or a KN95 variety of mask, the odds of testing positive were 83% lower than for non-wearers. For those wearing surgical masks, the odds of infection were 66% lower than for non-wearers.

The impact of cloth masks, on the other hand, was not statistically significant. But just 200 of the participants reported using cloth masks; a larger study might have enabled a firmer statistical conclusion.

In another recent real-world study, Duke University researchers found evidence supporting mask mandates in schools, where cloth masks are the norm.

In school districts where masks were required, cases of in-school transmission were 72% lower during the late summer and fall of 2021, compared with those where masks were optional, [the authors reported in Pediatrics](#). But the authors said they could not rule out if other precautions or demographic factors may have played a role.

### **Science and the public message**

Then there's the issue of messaging. The science is all about relative risk, but public health officials ultimately have to translate that nuance into a yes-or-no policy — keeping guidance as simple and straightforward as possible, to improve understanding. If they started specifying which kinds of masks were OK for various situations and people, adherence might suffer.

Julia Raifman, an assistant professor of health law, policy, and management at Boston University, called Philadelphia's mask mandate a sound approach. (She was interviewed before the decision to undo the mandate was announced Friday.)

"It's an ideal policy to let people keep going to work and school, and keep engaging with each other and the economy, with less of a chance of exposure to the virus," she said.

Yet others caution that at this stage of the pandemic, when risk is fairly low, a blanket mask mandate may backfire.

Requiring everyone to wear masks may seem like "crying wolf," leading some people to tune out when risk is higher, said Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner and professor of health policy and management at George Washington University. A more effective approach, she said, might be to give free N95 masks to all who want them.

### **Is there a downside to masks?**

Masks are not without consequences. They prevent the hearing-impaired from being able to read others' lips. And if a mask does not fit properly, it may contribute to eye problems, such as dryness and the reddish bumps called sties.

Detractors also have raised the possibility that masks could interfere with speech development in young children, though researchers [have generally not found that to be an issue](#).

	None of these concerns outweighs the potential consequences of COVID. But now that most people have been vaccinated, the risk of severe disease is greatly reduced.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Shanghai erects metal barriers in lockdown</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/shanghai-erects-metal-barriers-in-fight-against-covid-19/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/shanghai-erects-metal-barriers-in-fight-against-covid-19/</a>
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Volunteers and low-level government workers in Shanghai have erected metal barriers in multiple districts to block off small streets and entrances to apartment complexes, as China hardens its strict “zero-COVID” approach in the metropolis.</p> <p>In the city’s financial district, Pudong, the barriers — either thin metal sheets or mesh fences — were put up in several neighborhoods under a local government directive, according to Caixin, a Chinese business media outlet. Buildings where positive cases have been found sealed up their main entrances, with a small opening for pandemic prevention workers to pass through.</p> <p>China reported 21,796 new community-transmitted COVID-19 infections on Sunday, with the vast majority being asymptomatic cases in Shanghai. Across the country, many cities and provinces have enforced some version of a lockdown in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus.</p> <p>The latest outbreak, driven by the highly contagious omicron variant, has spread nationwide, but has been particularly large in Shanghai. The city, a financial hub with 25 million residents, has counted hundreds of thousands of cases but fewer than 100 deaths since the outbreak began nearly two months ago.</p> <p>An AP examination of the death toll found that despite a history of narrow criteria for linking deaths to particular diseases, especially COVID-19, authorities have changed how they count positive cases, leading to wiggle room in how they arrive at a final death count. The result is almost certainly an undercount of the true death toll.</p> <p>On social media, people posted videos of the new barriers being put up Saturday, with some expressing anger over the measures. The barriers are meant to leave main roads unblocked, Caixin reported.</p> <p>In one video, verified by the AP, residents leaving a building in Shanghai’s Xuhui district broke down the mesh fence barricade at their front entrance and went looking for the security guard they believed to be responsible for putting it up.</p> <p>Shanghai is using a tiered system in which neighborhoods are divided into three categories based on their risk of transmission. Those in the first category face the strictest COVID-19 controls and were the main target of the new heightened measures. In the third category, some buildings allow people to leave their homes and visit public areas.</p> <p>In Shanghai, authorities reported 39 new COVID-19 deaths, raising the official death toll to 4,725 as of the end of Saturday, the National Health Commission said Sunday.</p> <p>The city’s lockdown has drawn global attention for its strict approach and sometimes dangerous consequences. Many residents in the city have had difficulties getting groceries, resorting to bartering and bulk buying. Others have been unable get adequate medical attention in time, owing to the strict controls on movement.</p> <p>On Friday, Chinese internet users shared a six-minute video called “Voices of April” that documents some of the most challenging public moments the city has experienced in the nearly month-long lockdown. One part features audio of residents in one Shanghai community who protested on April 8, screaming: “Send us food! Send us food! Send us food!” in unison.</p> <p>The video blanketed WeChat timelines before it was abruptly removed by censors Saturday.</p>

	Chinese authorities have continued to say that the “zero-COVID” strategy is the best way forward given low vaccination rates in people over age 60, and that omicron would result in many deaths and severe illnesses if the country ended its strict approach.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 ODs not Covid, L.A. homeless deaths spike</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/overdoses-not-covid-19-drive-spike-in-la-homeless-deaths/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/overdoses-not-covid-19-drive-spike-in-la-homeless-deaths/</a>
GIST	<p>LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nearly 2,000 homeless people died in Los Angeles County during the first year of the pandemic, an increase of 56% from the previous year, driven mainly by drug overdoses, authorities said.</p> <p>The findings released Friday in a report from the county’s Department of Public Health showed that despite initial fears, the virus itself was not the main culprit in deaths among California’s largest-in-the-nation unhoused population. But it did cut people off from mental health and substance abuse treatment after services were drastically reduced to prevent the spread of the virus.</p> <p>Between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, the county recorded 1,988 deaths of homeless people, up from 1,271 deaths during the same period a year earlier, the report said.</p> <p>During both of those years, drug overdoses were the leading cause of death but increased by 78% during the pandemic’s first year. In the pre-pandemic year, the Department of Public Health reported 402 fatal overdoses. In the year after the outbreak, the number nearly doubled to 715, the report said.</p> <p>The report found that 179 homeless people died from COVID-19 during the pandemic’s first year.</p> <p>“The findings in this report reflect a true state of emergency,” said First District Supervisor Hilda L. Solis said in a statement. “In a civil society, it is unacceptable for any of us to not be profoundly disturbed by the shocking needs documented in this year’s homeless mortality report.”</p> <p>A study of San Francisco homeless deaths released last month showed similar findings: Between March 2020 and March 2021, there were 331 homeless deaths recorded in San Francisco, more than twice the number of any previous year, with the leading cause of death being drug overdose, according to a study conducted by the University of California San Francisco and the city’s Department of Public Health.</p> <p>Los Angeles County is home to the Skid Row neighborhood, notorious for poverty and drugs and where LA’s homeless population was once largely confined. Now, rows of tents, cardboard shelters, battered RVs and makeshift plywood structures are familiar sights throughout the nation’s second-most populous city.</p> <p>Cities and states across the country are grappling with growing homelessness, as well as mental health crises. California has the largest unhoused population in the country, estimated at 161,000 with nearly a quarter of that number suffering from severe mental illness, according to a 2020 count of homeless people required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.</p> <p>The pandemic likely exacerbated an already growing drug and overdose problem, driven by the prevalence of fentanyl, authorities said. Methamphetamine was involved in the majority of deaths, at 75%, roughly the same as the previous year. But the involvement of fentanyl in overdose deaths nearly doubled to 45%, the report said.</p> <p>“The COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on people experiencing homelessness has clearly extended beyond the immediate effects of this new and deadly virus,” said Los Angeles Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer. “The pandemic has exacerbated stressors already burdening this vulnerable population.”</p>

	<p>Young, Latino and Black people experiencing homelessness drove the increases in fatal overdoses, the report said.</p> <p>Coronary heart disease was the second leading cause of death in the first year of the pandemic, accounting for 309 deaths and an increase of almost 30% from the previous year, the report said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Mask mandates return to college campuses</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/mask-mandates-return-to-us-college-campuses-as-cases-rise/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/mask-mandates-return-to-us-college-campuses-as-cases-rise/</a>
GIST	<p>The final weeks of the college school year have been disrupted yet again by COVID-19 as universities bring back mask mandates, switch to online classes and scale back large gatherings in response to upticks in coronavirus infections.</p> <p>Colleges in Washington, D.C., New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Texas have reimposed a range of virus measures, with Howard University moving to remote learning amid a surge in cases in the nation's capital.</p> <p>This is the third straight academic year that has been upended by COVID-19, meaning soon-to-be seniors have yet to experience a normal college year.</p> <p>"I feel like last summer it was everyone was like, 'Oh, this is it. We're nearing the tail end,'" recalled Nina Heller, a junior at American University in Washington D.C., where administrators brought back a mask mandate about a month after lifting it. "And then that didn't quite happen, and now we're here at summer again, and there's kind of no end."</p> <p>Mandates were shed widely in the wake of spring break as case numbers dropped following a winter surge fueled by the omicron variant. But several Northeast cities have seen a rise in cases and hospitalizations in recent weeks, as the BA.2 subvariant of the omicron variant continues to rapidly spread throughout the U.S.</p> <p>"As much as we would like to move on and think that the pandemic is over, and I think we all would like that to happen at this point, it's wishful thinking," said Anita Barkin, co-chair of a COVID-19 task force for the American College Health Association. "The pandemic is still with us."</p> <p>COVID-19 had eased so much at Williams College that the private liberal arts school in Massachusetts allowed professors to decide whether to require masks in their classes early last week. But just days later, with cases rising, it reinstated an indoor mask mandate, which was even stricter than what had been in place before.</p> <p>"I think students are really feeling like people they know are dropping like flies," said junior Kitt Urdang, who's had a half-dozen friends test positive in recent days. "There's definitely been a lot more uncertainty than there's been on campus since COVID hit."</p> <p>Philadelphia recently brought back its mask mandate, leading the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University to again require them starting Monday. Although the city ended the mandate Thursday, the colleges haven't made any changes.</p> <p>In Washington, D.C., Howard University's main campus, affectionately dubbed "The Hilltop" by students and alums, was largely quiet this week, with many students taking classes and exams from home. The academic year is coming to a muted end as rising virus numbers prompted administrators to abruptly shift back to online education.</p> <p>The city's COVID infection rate has more than doubled in April. Besides American, Georgetown and George Washington University also reinstated their indoor mask mandates. But Howard is the only one</p>



that has moved away from in-person instruction. The spring semester ends Friday, with final exams for most students starting next week. Administrators have promised an update on what this means for the May 7 commencement ceremony.

“I don’t think people are super unhappy about wearing masks,” said Lia DeGroot, a George Washington senior who never shed her mask during the single week the mandate was lifted at her school. “Of all of the things that the pandemic has disrupted, I think wearing masks is, you know, a relatively small thing to do. I think that’s kind of the mindset that a lot of students have.”

In nearby Baltimore, Maryland, Johns Hopkins University announced this month that it was testing all undergraduate students twice weekly through Friday, noting a steep rise in cases. The school also said masks would be required not just in classrooms, but in places like residence hall common areas.

In Houston, Rice University announced earlier this month that students should resume wearing masks in classrooms, citing an uptick in cases on campus. Large college parties also were canceled.

New Mexico State University took a different tack, announcing Monday that all students on campus must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by July 1, ending the option of submitting weekly tests as an alternative.

One of the few counties still identified by the CDC as having high spread is home to New York’s Syracuse University, which announced Monday that it would again require masks in classrooms.

J. Michael Haynie, the school’s vice chancellor for strategic initiatives and innovation, said in a letter that “it is important that we take reasonable action to minimize the impact of COVID infections” with finals and commencement fast approaching.

The University of Rochester in upstate New York, the University of Connecticut, Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, and Columbia University in New York City took a similar approach. Many, like Columbia, noted that their surveillance testing programs were finding more cases.

While many students were eager to mask up, grumbling was emerging.

“We’re to the point where we’re tired of masks,” said Neeraj Sudhakar, a Columbia grad student studying financial engineering. “We probably have a 99% vaccination rate, so at this point I think we just need to move on with the pandemic and treat it as endemic rather than going back to what we were doing the past two years.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Homeless camps cleared ahead Biden visit</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/two-homeless-camps-removed-ahead-of-president-joe-bidens-seattle-visit/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/two-homeless-camps-removed-ahead-of-president-joe-bidens-seattle-visit/</a>
GIST	<p>The city of Seattle cleared two homeless encampments within a few blocks of the Westin Seattle this week in anticipation of President Joe Biden’s visit.</p> <p>Biden visited Seattle on Earth Day, in part to sign an executive order at Seward Park aimed at protecting old-growth forests from the ravages of wildfires. He also touched on ever-rising health care and prescription drug costs as a driver of booming inflation in a speech at Green River College in Auburn.</p> <p>His visit caused traffic snarls around the county and large gatherings of people who wanted to see or protest the president.</p> <p>It also spurred Mayor Bruce Harrell to remove about 15 people from the two downtown encampments where they had been living, according to Jamie Housen, spokesperson for the mayor’s office.</p>

Housen said that the people living there were to leave so that the city could close the streets and limit access to sidewalks to ensure the safety of the president. The mayor's office said that staff were unaware of Biden's exact travel routes and timing.

Seattle Parks and Recreation staff gave two days' notice that any remaining belongings must be removed by Thursday.

Housen said that nine tents and shelter structures were removed from Virginia Street to Olive Way between Sixth and Fifth avenues. Three people staying there left on their own and four others were referred to shelter by the city's encampment outreach team.

Four tents were removed between Lenora and Virginia streets, from Fifth Avenue to Fourth Avenue. Four people there left voluntarily and two others were referred to shelters.

Several other encampments were also cleared this week, including one at Thorndyke Park. Housen said those were unrelated to Biden's visit.

However, the reduced visibility of one of the region's top issues rubbed some the wrong way.

Executive director of the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness Alison Eisinger denounced the city's decision to remove the camps.

She said the city needs a "better planned" and "genuinely helpful" approach to addressing encampments, and criticized Harrell's approach. She said that residents of camps should be given more forewarning that the city plans to make them move, and that it disrupts homeless people's ability to stay connected to social services.

"Attempting to justify these harmful actions because of a presidential visit is shameful," Eisinger said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 New homeless shelter empty amid feud</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/its-a-feud-brand-new-homeless-shelter-sits-empty-as-leaders-squabble/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/its-a-feud-brand-new-homeless-shelter-sits-empty-as-leaders-squabble/</a>
GIST	<p>There's no better symbol of the bureaucratic dysfunction on homelessness than the one currently sitting in plain view, across from the Rainier Beach light-rail station in Seattle.</p> <p>It's a cluster of 40 blue and green tiny houses, each wired for heat and light and brand new, built along tidy gravel paths. There's an industrial kitchen, showers and a laundry. It's a full-service emergency shelter, with case counselors at the ready provided by the Refugee Women's Alliance.</p> <p>All it lacks is the main thing it was built for: homeless people.</p> <p>The shelter has been sitting empty for weeks now while hundreds in Seattle's south end sleep on the streets because ... well, because our leaders are squabbling like teenagers?</p> <p>Honestly that's the best explanation I can come up with for this latest fiasco.</p> <p>"It's a bit of a feud," one advocate not involved in the project testified to the Regional Homelessness Authority last week. "None of us can afford household fights, and I think that's what this is."</p> <p>The fact that Seattle has a shelter going unused was first brought to light by former Seattle City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw. She's been volunteering to build the 8-by-12-foot tiny houses. She wrote to a slew of city and county leaders last week that <a href="#">we've had an entire village of them sitting empty since late March</a>, during which time people have died living in greenbelts and under bridges.</p>

“It’s unopened because operating funding hasn’t been forthcoming,” she wrote. “This is a waste.”

What happened is that the Low Income Housing Institute built the village because the city had at one time pledged to fund it, and the City Council was supportive. But then control switched from the city to the new [Regional Homelessness Authority](#). Last month, that group denied operating funding to the project.

It did this though construction was nearly finished at the time.

“It makes no sense to us, and it’s never been explained, why they would turn down a shelter that’s one hundred percent built and ready to go,” says Sharon Lee, LIHI’s executive director.

At a [recent meeting of the regional authority](#), some hinted there was bad blood, and a power struggle, between the authority and Lee.

“We shouldn’t allow agencies to dictate how we operate,” said Harold Odom, co-chair of an RHA committee, referring to LIHI. He lives in a tiny house village and accused LIHI of “complaining” excessively and being misleading.

“Before people can ask for more money, make sure they can do what they’re saying on paper first,” Odom said. “And that’s personal.”

The CEO of the regional authority, Marc Dones, denied the agency’s got any ax to grind, at least not with tiny homes as shelter.

“If I really wanted to get rid of them, I would have just defunded them on, like, day three,” Dones said. “Like, they’d be gone. We wouldn’t be having this conversation, right?”

See what I mean about squabbling like teenagers?

It’s true that Sharon Lee can be a pit bull in a town full of poodles. Here’s how this newspaper described her back in 1997 when she was in a showdown with business interests over a homeless hygiene facility downtown:

“To meet Lee is to have strong opinions about her. She is variously portrayed as brilliant, passionate, charming, disagreeable and deceitful. Everyone agrees she is steadfast. One person likened her to Jason, the ghoul who won’t die in the ‘Friday the 13th’ movies.”

Right, but guess who eventually got the hygiene facilities built — and is still operating them today?

Since that story, LIHI has also gone on to build more than 4,000 units of affordable apartments and shelter. That makes Lee one of the bigger developers of housing of any kind in the region.

“They just do more than anybody else,” says state Rep. Frank Chopp, D-Seattle, who did a [power play himself recently](#) when he took \$2 million in grants from the RHA and earmarked it for LIHI — a group he helped start 30 years ago. “They house more people. Does that come with rough edges? Yes, but so be it.”

“I think what we have here is a clashing of very strong personalities,” says George Scarola, who was the city’s homelessness director in 2015, and is now a sometime advisor to LIHI. “The City Council, the mayor, the RHA, LIHI, the other nonprofits — we all get in our own way sometimes.”

OK, back to homelessness (that’s the human crisis this story is supposed to be about, remember?)

South End Village, sitting empty, needs about \$700,000 to run for the rest of the year. That would cover security, utilities, staffing the kitchen and some case services. LIHI can’t tap the \$2 million from Chopp because that’s restricted to capital spending, not operations.

	<p>Lee says she's now going to try to open the shelter anyway, in May, using solely private donations. Scarola says it's risky to open a shelter without a government partner. So far, none has stepped up.</p> <p>On a recent visit, I was told the village has staff onsite 24/7, even though it's empty. Why, I asked?</p> <p>The answer was that people are so in need of places to sleep that some would likely break in and move into the tiny houses as squatters.</p> <p>What a Kafkaesque turn. We're six years into our homelessness "emergency." And due to egos and fiefdom feuds, here's a shelter, empty, that's being guarded not to protect the homeless people it was built to serve.</p> <p>It's being guarded to keep them out.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Concerns: Navy sailors' suicides on carrier</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/04/23/navy-sailors-suicides/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/04/23/navy-sailors-suicides/</a>
GIST	<p>A string of recent suicides among sailors assigned to the same U.S. aircraft carrier has sparked concern, prompting questions about mental health issues in the military and potential barriers to seeking treatment.</p> <p>Navy officials confirmed that at least four sailors assigned to the USS George Washington have died by suicide in the past year — three of them in the past month. Retail Services Spec. 3rd Class Mikail Sharp was found dead April 9 at an off-base location in Portsmouth, Va.; Interior Communications Electrician 3rd Class Natasha Huffman was found dead April 10 in Hampton, Va.; and on April 15, Master at Arms Seaman Recruit Xavier Hunter Mitchell-Sandor was found unresponsive on board the ship in Newport News, Va., and later died, officials said.</p> <p>The fourth sailor, who has not been publicly identified, died by suicide in 2021, and the cause of a fifth death that occurred last year is undetermined, according to officials.</p> <p>"Each death is tragic in its own right," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said during a news conference this week. "Our thoughts and prayers continue to go out to the families and, frankly, the shipmates because they're affected, too — they're part of a sailors' family."</p> <p>Mental health experts say the recent spate of suicides is concerning and raises questions about whether there are underlying issues in the military's culture contributing to the problem — and how to fix them.</p> <p>Experts say suicide deaths among service members have been a persistent problem since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq but have been steadily climbing during the past several years. A Department of Defense report shows that there were 287 suicides in 2017 among active duty members in all branches of the military, 326 in 2018, 349 in 2019 and 386 in 2020. The number of suicides dropped in 2021 to 328, according to the report.</p> <p>The coronavirus created unique stressors and, in fact, military suicides spiked during the pandemic, experts said.</p> <p>Craig Bryan, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral health at Ohio State University, said suicide clusters are often a coincidence. But mental health experts also see them when there is an underlying factor affecting an entire group, and "some people who are perhaps more vulnerable kind of exceed the thresholds for suicide," he said.</p> <p>The third and least-common scenario is when the suicides are directly linked to one another, Bryan said. Lt. Cmdr. Rob Myers, a public affairs officer with Naval Air Force Atlantic, said in a statement that the investigation is ongoing, but "there is no initial indication to suggest there is a correlation between these tragic events."</p>

Sharp, Huffman, Mitchell-Sandor and the two sailors who have not been publicly identified were all assigned to the USS George Washington. The nuclear-powered, Nimitz-class aircraft carrier has been docked since 2017 at Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Va., undergoing a major overhaul.

But oftentimes, it is not at the height of crisis — or combat — when members of the military start to experience mental health issues, said M. David Rudd, distinguished professor of psychology and director of the Institute for Veteran and Military Suicide Prevention at the University of Memphis.

“In the midst of crisis and in the midst of significant demands, people feel a real sense of purpose,” he said.

“It’s afterward, it’s in these periods where there’s less activity, less to do, less purpose and less structure, that it creates opportunities for people to reflect and to feel and to think” about difficulties in other areas of their lives, Rudd said. In those times, problems tend to take on more emotional meaning, fueling depression, anxiety and substance use “that are always a part of the problem with suicide,” Rudd explained.

Mental health experts agree that one limitation in preventing military suicides is that suicides are extremely complex, typically involving a number of factors, and there is rarely one explanation or solution. In addition, there are military policies and procedures that can make it more difficult — not less — for those seeking help.

Rudd said one problem is that there is an inherent conflict between stated military values — courage, duty and selfless service — and human vulnerabilities. “All of those things are wonderful and are appropriate in warrior culture. But the problem is it doesn’t leave soldiers, and particularly young people, much room to be human when they have emotional problems or they have mental health challenges,” he said.

Rudd said many facing mental health challenges say they feel a sense of failure for not meeting that standard.

Aside from that internal struggle, Rudd said another problem is that service members must generally disclose to superiors that they are seeking care from a mental health professional. “Those are things that, not purposefully, but just inadvertently, fuel shame and stigma that prevent people from asking for help at these critical times,” he said.

Rudd said the military needs to look closely at policies that are in place that could create potential barriers.

As for the USS George Washington, Navy officials said there is a full medical team aboard the ship, including a psychologist and a corpsman who is qualified as a behavioral health technician.

Sharp, who was found dead April 9, was the first in the recent spate of suicides.

The 23-year-old, who joined the Navy nearly two years ago, had recently gotten married and was planning to buy a house and start a family, his mother, Natalie Jefferson, told NBC News.

Jefferson, who lived with her son in Norfolk, said she had no idea he was struggling, calling him “the life of the party.”

“He never showed his pain,” she told the network.

A day after Sharp’s death, Huffman’s body was found at an off-base location in Hampton, Navy officials said. She had joined the Navy in summer 2018.

In a heart-wrenching Facebook post, Huffman’s mother, Kathleen Krull, wrote that her daughter “always stood up for the underdog” and that she was “fiercely protective of the people she loved.”

	<p>“It still doesn’t in some ways feel real to me that my baby girl is gone,” Krull wrote.</p> <p>Less than a year after Mitchell-Sandor joined the Navy, he was found unresponsive April 15 aboard the ship and was rushed to Riverside Regional Medical Center, where he died, CBS News reported.</p> <p>Mitchell-Sandor, 19, had an affinity for sports. He had a black belt in karate and was the quarterback of his high school football team, according to his obituary. It was during his senior year that he enlisted and was sent to boot camp in Great Lakes, Ill., where he excelled as a leader yeoman and sharpshooter, his obituary stated.</p> <p>He was stationed on the USS George Washington “where he protected the ship until his untimely death,” it read.</p> <p>Jefferson, Sharp’s mother, urged other military members who may be struggling to get help “because the last thing any parent wants to do is bury their child,” she said, according to NBC News.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/23 Alaska Air pilots’ strike authorization vote</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/alaska-airlines-pilots-schedule-strike-authorization-vote-for-may/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/alaska-airlines-pilots-schedule-strike-authorization-vote-for-may/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>As contract negotiations continue, the union representing Alaska Airlines pilots has scheduled a strike-authorization vote for May.</p> <p>The pilots and the airline have been negotiating terms of a new contract since 2019. Though those negotiations were paused at the onset of the COVID pandemic, they later stalled and are currently the subject of federal mediation.</p> <p>On Friday, the Air Line Pilots Association announced Alaska pilots would begin receiving ballots for a strike-authorization vote on May 9, and that votes would be tallied after May 25. The vote would allow union leadership to declare a strike.</p> <p>Before the pilots could walk off the job, though, they would need to receive permission from the National Mediation Board, the federal body that intervenes in deadlocked labor negotiations involving railroads and airlines.</p> <p>The board would have to determine that negotiations had broken down entirely before a strike could legally occur. Since 1980, 99% of all disputes brought before the board have been settled without a work stoppage.</p> <p>“Alaska pilots are not looking to strike. We are looking for improvements to our contract in line with the market but that will also allow our company to grow and remain successful and competitive,” Will McQuillen, chairman of the 3,100-member Alaska Airlines pilots union, said in a statement. “However, we are willing to take any lawful steps necessary, including a legal strike.”</p> <p>The union contends Alaska has been unwilling to meet its demands regarding scheduling stability, pay and other quality-of-life issues; the airline disputes the claims.</p> <p>Emphasizing that “a strike in our industry is rare and does not happen quickly,” an Alaska Airlines spokesperson argued that the airline’s most recent contract proposal “represents the largest investment ever made by the company and would increase pay, flexibility and secure jobs.”</p> <p>“This vote is not uncommon in this stage of negotiations and was expected,” the spokesperson said by email. “The vote will not impact our guests or operation. We remain committed to reaching agreement on a new contract that values our pilots’ contributions.”</p>



	<p>The strike-authorization vote is the latest in a series of labor actions meant to increase pressure on Alaska. On April 1, hundreds of Alaska pilots picketed the airline’s hub airports as well as its headquarters at SeaTac.</p> <p>The union dispute comes as Alaska is attempting to address a labor shortage so acute that it was forced to cancel 2% of its flights — 24 flights a day — this spring. Airline executives <a href="#">continue to tout expansive growth plans that would see it add more than 100 Boeing 737 MAX jets in coming years.</a></p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 WA: ‘marijuana’ term racist; gets rid of word</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/lawmakers-strike-word-marijuana-all-state-laws-calling-term-racist/MJOQZ7OCK5CUDLBA2H53CYOJXE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/lawmakers-strike-word-marijuana-all-state-laws-calling-term-racist/MJOQZ7OCK5CUDLBA2H53CYOJXE/</a>
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — “Pot,” “weed,” “grass,” “Mary Jane,” “flower” — there is no shortage of terms to describe cannabis. However, Washington state is taking one word officially off the table: “marijuana.”</p> <p>Legislators recently passed a law that changes every Revised Code of Washington with the word “marijuana.” The change gets rid of the term, swapping it out for the word “cannabis.”</p> <p>Supporters say the word “marijuana” has a long history of racism.</p> <p>“The term ‘marijuana’ itself is pejorative and racist,” said Washington state Rep. Melanie Morgan during testimony in 2021. Morgan is a Democrat representing the 29th Legislative District and sponsored the bill — House Bill 1210. Morgan discussed the history of the word, which originates from Spanish.</p> <p>“As recreational marijuana use became more popular, it was negatively associated with Mexican immigrants,” Morgan said.</p> <p>Governor Jay Inslee signed the bill that passed unanimously into law March 11. The changes will take effect in June.</p> <p>“Even though it seems simple because it’s just one word, the reality is we’re healing the wrongs that were committed against Black and Brown people around cannabis,” Morgan said.</p> <p>Joy Hollingsworth owns Hollingsworth Cannabis Company with her family. The family business includes a pot farm in Shelton. They also run a hemp side, called Hollingsworth Hemp Company, which produces a line of non-THC hemp products, like candles and lotions.</p> <p>She says for people of color in the industry, the word “marijuana” comes with a burden.</p> <p>“It had been talked about for a long time in our community about how that word demonizes the cannabis plant,” Hollingsworth said.</p> <p>Harry Anslinger, the first commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (which later became the Drug Enforcement Administration) played a big role in the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, which banned selling or possessing weed.</p> <p>“It was ... Anslinger that said and I quote, ‘Marijuana is the most violent causing drug in the history of mankind. And most marijuana users are Negroes, Hispanic, Caribbean, and entertainers. Their satanic music, jazz and swing results from marijuana usage,’” said Morgan during testimony.</p> <p>To explain the mentality around weed in the 1930s, several lawmakers referenced the anti-pot propaganda film, “Reefer Madness.”</p>

“In this startling film, you will see dopesters lure children to destruction,” says a trailer of the film on YouTube. “A new and deadly menace lurking behind closed doors: Marijuana! The burning weed with its roots in hell.”

“It was used as a racist terminology to lock up Black and brown people,” Morgan said during commentary on the bill in this year.

Hollingsworth says her mother taught her about the trauma behind the word.

“She was the one who educated us on the term and how it was derogatory and we shouldn’t use it anymore,” Hollingsworth said. “We have a lot of people, especially in the Black community that went to prison over cannabis for years. That were locked up, separated from their nuclear family, which is huge,” she said.

“It’s really painful for people to hear that word and it triggers them,” Hollingsworth said.

A 2020 ACLU report found that nationwide, Black people were still 3.6 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than white people.

State Rep. Emily Wicks says the bill changes the conversation around cannabis in Washington.

“Although we call it a technical fix, I think it does a lot to undo or at least correct in some effort, some of the serious harms around this language,” Wicks said.

“If you have a group of people saying this word is derogatory, this word is pain, just not something we should use — we need to have a better understanding of listening to folks,” Hollingsworth said. “Just change it and move on,” she said.

Hollingsworth points out there is a lot more work to do when it comes to equity in the cannabis industry.

“We’ll take any win right? But we don’t want to get caught up on the performative equity piece where we’re just talking about words and not actual legislation and policy,” Hollingsworth said.

One change she is hoping to see is a piece of cannabis tax dollars reinvested into communities of color.

“We will feel like the industry has paid off when we see those funds get put into college scholarships. Maybe a family wanted to buy a home and they were from the Central District of Seattle, and they wanted to go back there because they were priced out. They could get a loan from those funds. Thinking about creative ways to make impactful scalable solutions in our community is what I’m looking for,” Hollingsworth said.

Lawmakers did establish the “Washington Task Force on Social Equity in Cannabis” in 2020. One change already in the works is to bring more diversity to pot shop owners. Minority applicants for cannabis licenses could receive grants and assistance that help business owners get established.

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HEADLINE	04/23 Hundreds march; support Starbucks union
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/hundreds-march-through-downtown-seattle-support-newly-unionized-starbucks-employees/PWYCQHUIAZAG5EON6C3C65YPLE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/hundreds-march-through-downtown-seattle-support-newly-unionized-starbucks-employees/PWYCQHUIAZAG5EON6C3C65YPLE/</a>
GIST	<p>Hundreds marched into downtown Seattle in support of Starbucks’ newly unionized workers, despite harrowing stories from around the country.</p> <p>The march was part of a push to organize workers at two Seattle corporate giants.</p> <p>This latest push comes as the flagship Starbucks Reserve Roastery in Seattle voted to unionize this week.</p>

So far, Workers United says it has organized 25 other Starbucks stores around the country.

At the center of that fight here is Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant.

Sawant has been giving up part of her salary to support causes like this one.

Sawant's contribution is how union organizers were able to bring Starbucks workers here from around the country.

Workers came here to Cal Anderson Park to share their stories and add their voices to what they say is a national movement to unionize Starbucks, as well as Amazon.

Hundreds of people, many of them workers at Starbucks in the Emerald City and beyond, took to the streets of Seattle. Here, they said, they intended to send a message to newly reappointed CEO Howard Schultz.

Their chants rang out as they made their way to Westlake Park unescorted by Seattle police, giving a boost to workers on the front lines.

"Oh, I love this stuff," said Billie Adeosun. "This is, this is our most powerful weapon."

Adeosun works at an Olympia Starbucks which, she says, was the first on the West Coast to start to organize, although workers did not undergo the effort without trepidation. Now she is watching the union movement catch fire among her peers.

"We're showing (newly reinstated CEO) Howard Schultz, and we're showing other corporations that are just like Starbucks, that we're not going to be silenced," said Adeosun, "that we're not going to stop."

Just last Thursday, the Workers United union squeaked out a victory at the Starbucks Reserve Roastery, the 26th yes vote so far at the Seattle-based coffee giant.

"I think a big part of it was just the teamwork amongst all the partners at the Roastery," said Liz Duran, a Roastery worker for one year.

But there were less triumphant stories from Starbucks workers that Seattle Councilmember Kshama Sawant flew in from around the country.

"This month would have been my third year until I was fired April 11th," said Hannah Whitbeck, from Ann Arbor, Michigan. "I was fired for leaving a barista in the store alone without contacting management."

Now Sawant is inviting workers to join in protest on May 1, May Day.

As for the Olympia Starbucks workers who started the union movement here, they expect to find out the results of their union vote next Friday.

So, stay tuned.

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HEADLINE	04/23 Biden visits Seattle on Earth Day
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/biden-visits-seattle-on-earth-day-president-signs-order-to-protect-old-growth-forests-from-fire">https://www.q13fox.com/news/biden-visits-seattle-on-earth-day-president-signs-order-to-protect-old-growth-forests-from-fire</a>

**SEATTLE** - [President Joe Biden](#) on Friday signed an executive order intended to help restore national forests devastated by wildfires, drought and blight, using an Earth Day visit to [Seattle](#) to press for more action on the environment.

Biden also visited Green River College in Auburn, Wash. to talk about efforts to bring down prescription drug costs for American families.

The president was scheduled to depart from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Friday afternoon.

Although Biden has struggled to make progress on his most ambitious climate goals, he drew a sharp contrast with his predecessor, former President Donald Trump, who unraveled the country's fight against global warming.

"We've reached the point where the crisis on the environment has become so obvious, with the notable exception of the former president, that we really have an opportunity to do things we couldn't have done two, five, ten years ago," Biden said.

Biden said he was staking his hopes on an up-and-coming generation.

"Every time I get a little down ... I just turn on the television or take a look at all the young people," he said. "This younger generation is not going to put up with all this stuff. No, they're not."

Biden detoured into his concerns about getting environmental legislation through Congress, focusing on opposition from Republicans that he described as part of "a MAGA party." He downplayed divisions among Democrats, saying there are only "two senators who occasionally don't vote with me," a glancing reference to Sens. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona.

"My pen is ready," Biden said. "Get some of these bills to my desk."

After his speech against a backdrop of flowering trees in Seward Park, Biden sat down at a table to sign his executive order.

Biden's order directs federal land managers to define and inventory mature and old-growth forests nationwide within a year. The order requires the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service to identify threats to older trees, such as wildfire and climate change, and develop policies to safeguard them.

Old-growth trees are key buffers against climate change and provide crucial carbon sinks that absorb significant amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. The order does not ban logging of mature or old-growth trees, the White House said.

By signing the order, Biden can publicly reassert his environmentalist credentials at a time when his administration has been [preoccupied by high oil and gasoline prices](#) following [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#). [Gas costs](#) have been a drag on Biden's popularity and created short-term political pressures going into [this year's midterm elections](#), yet the Democratic president has been focused on wildfires that are intensifying because of climate change.

The measure is intended to safeguard national forests that been severely damaged by wildfires, drought and blight, including recent fires that [killed thousands of giant sequoias](#) in California. Redwood forests are among the world's most efficient at removing and storing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and provide critical habitat for native wildlife and watersheds that supply farms and communities in the West.

Blazes so intense to kill trees once considered virtually fire-proof have alarmed land managers, environmentalists and tree lovers the world over — and demonstrated the grave impacts of climate change.

A warming planet that has created longer and hotter droughts, combined with a century of fire suppression that choked forests with thick undergrowth, has fueled flames that extinguished trees dating to ancient civilizations.

A senior administration official noted that forests absorb more than 10% of U.S. annual greenhouse gases, while also providing flood control, clean water, clear air and a home to wildlife. The official insisted on anonymity to discuss details of Biden's order before it was made public.

Biden's ambitious climate agenda has been marred by setbacks, [a year after he took office](#) amid a flurry of climate-related promises. The president hosted [a virtual summit on global warming](#) at the White House last Earth Day. He used the moment to nearly double the United States' goal for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, vaulting the country to the front lines in the fight against climate change.

A year later, [his most sweeping proposals remain stalled](#) on Capitol Hill despite renewed warnings from scientists that the world is hurtling toward a dangerous future marked by extreme heat, drought and weather.

In addition, Russia's war in Ukraine has reshuffled the politics of climate change, leading Biden to release oil from the nation's strategic reserve and encourage more domestic drilling in hopes of lowering sky-high gas prices that are emptying American wallets.

While Biden is [raising fuel economy standards](#) for vehicles and included green policies in last year's [bipartisan infrastructure law](#), the lack of greater progress casts a shadow over his second Earth Day as president.

Timber industry representative Nick Smith said before the order was made public that loggers are worried it will add more bureaucracy to a forest management framework already unable to keep up with growing wildfires due to climate change.

That would undercut the Biden administration's goal of doubling the amount of logging and controlled burns over the next decade to thin forests in the tinder-dry West, said Smith, a spokesman for the American Forest Resource Council, an Oregon-based industry group.

"The federal government has an urgent need to reduce massive greenhouse gas emissions from severe wildfires, which can only be accomplished by actively managing our unhealthy and overstocked federal forests," he said.

But former U.S. Forest Service Deputy Chief Jim Furnish said wildfire risks and climate change would be better addressed by removing smaller trees that can fuel uncontrolled blazes, while leaving mature trees in place.

For many years the Forest Service allowed older trees that are worth more to be logged, to bring in money for removal of smaller trees, Furnish said. But that's no longer necessary after Congress approved more than \$5 billion to reduce wildfire risks in last year's infrastructure bill, he said. The law includes money to hire 1,500 firefighters and ensure they earn at least \$15 an hour.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, we're known as leaders in technology when it comes to creating environmentally friendly buildings, and a true example of that is the Bullitt Center in Seattle's Capitol Hill.

Timber sales from federal forests nationwide more than doubled over the past 20 years, as Republicans and Democrats have pushed more aggressive thinning of stands to reduce small trees and vegetation that fuel wildfires.

Critics, including many forest scientists, say officials are allowing removal of too many older trees that can withstand fire.

	<p>A letter signed by 135 scientists called on Biden to protect mature and old-growth forests as a critical climate solution.</p> <p>"Older forests provide the most above-ground carbon storage potential on Earth, with mature forests and larger trees driving most accumulation of forest carbon in the critical next few decades. Left vulnerable to logging, though, they cannot fulfill these vital functions," the scientists wrote Thursday. Former Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck and Norman Christensen, founding dean and professor emeritus at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment, were among those signing the letter.</p> <p>Protecting mature forests also "would set an important, highly visible example for other major forest-holding nations to follow as they address climate change threats," the scientists wrote.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Port of Seattle kicks off 2022 cruise season</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/port-of-seattle-kicks-off-2022-cruise-season">https://www.q13fox.com/news/port-of-seattle-kicks-off-2022-cruise-season</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE, Wash.</b> - The Port of <a href="#">Seattle</a> welcomed its first cruise ship of the season Saturday, marking the first day of the 2022 cruise season.</p> <p>Norwegian Cruise Line's <i>Bliss</i> arrived at Bell Street Cruise Terminal at Pier 66 at around 9:30 a.m. Saturday morning, and will leave for <a href="#">Alaska</a> later in the day.</p> <p>The Port of Seattle released its <a href="#">preliminary cruise schedule for 2022</a>, with 296 scheduled sailings bringing an estimated 1.26 million revenue passengers. Cruise lines are adding additional ships to the Alaska market this season. It is anticipated that the number of passengers per ship will vary by sailing and will increase as the season progresses.</p> <p><i>"The Port of Seattle looks forward to providing another season of safe cruise experiences as we continue to work with our local public health officials to ensure the health and safety of passengers, crews, and the community. Our vision is for a thriving Seattle Alaska cruise industry, one that leads the world in terms of environmental standards, inspiring other Ports to meet the same high standards, and delivers job and business opportunities where they are needed most,"</i> said Stephanie Jones Stebbins, Managing Director of Maritime at the Port of Seattle. <i>"Cruise is a critical part of our local and regional economy, supporting thousands of jobs across maritime, tourism, hospitality, agriculture, and services."</i></p> <p>Port operations help support nearly 200,000 jobs and \$7 billion in wages throughout the region. Over the next 15 years, the Port hopes to create 100,000 additional jobs through economic growth – while becoming the nation's leading green and energy-efficient port.</p> <p>Prior to the <a href="#">COVID-19 pandemic</a>, the Port of Seattle were expecting a record year in 2020 with 233 cruise vessels carrying an expected 1.3 million passengers. 2020's forecast was slated to provide 5,500 jobs and nearly \$900 million in economic revenue for our region. With no cruise activity in 2020, the economic losses due to the drop in tourism were devastating locally and in Alaska.</p> <p>Later this spring, the Port, cruise lines, and tourism partners will host a pre-season webinar to answer community questions about the upcoming cruise season. Registration links will be posted to the Port's webpage and social media channels once details are confirmed.</p>
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 State TV: Iran foiled cyberattacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://news.yahoo.com/state-tv-says-iran-foiled-062231480.html?msclkid=752dc677c48111ecbd875d638e548fc1&amp;guccounter=1">https://news.yahoo.com/state-tv-says-iran-foiled-062231480.html?msclkid=752dc677c48111ecbd875d638e548fc1&amp;guccounter=1</a>



GIST	<p>TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's state television said authorities have foiled massive cyberattacks that sought to target public services, both government and privately owned.</p> <p>The report late on Sunday said Iran thwarted the attacks that planned to target the infrastructure of more than 100 public sector agencies. It did not elaborate or name specific examples of public sector agencies, organizations or services but said the incidents happened in recent days.</p> <p>The report said that unidentified parties behind the cyberattacks used Internet Protocols in the Netherlands, Britain and the United States to stage the attacks.</p> <p>Iran occasionally announces cyberattacks targeting the Islamic Republic as world powers struggle to revive a tattered nuclear deal with Tehran.</p> <p>In October, <a href="#">an assault on Iran's fuel distribution system</a> paralyzed gas stations nationwide, leading to long lines of angry motorists stranded in long lines and unable to get subsidized fuel for days. In July, a cyberattack on Iran's railway system caused chaos and train delays.</p> <p>Iran disconnected much of its government infrastructure from the internet after the Stuxnet computer virus — widely believed to be a joint U.S.-Israeli creation — disrupted Iranian centrifuges in the country's nuclear sites in the late 2000s.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 China internet erupts in protest</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/25/china/china-covid-beijing-shanghai-mic-intl-hnk/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/25/china/china-covid-beijing-shanghai-mic-intl-hnk/index.html</a>
GIST	<p><b>Hong Kong (CNN)</b>The shouts of locked-down residents demanding basic necessities, the cries of babies separated from their parents in quarantine, the pleas of a son repeatedly rejected by hospitals to treat his critically ill father, and the sobs of an exhausted local official who admits there is "no good policy" coming from higher authorities for her to explain to residents.</p> <p>These voices, charged with raw frustration, agony and desperation, are among the montage of audio recordings featured in "Voices of April," a video documenting the harsh impact of <a href="#">Shanghai's nearly month-long lockdown</a>.</p> <p>The <a href="#">city-wide lockdown</a>, among the strictest the country has seen, has plunged the once-bustling international financial hub into a virtual ghost town, causing shortage of food, daily necessities and even medical access for many of its 25 million residents confined to their homes.</p> <p>"A month into the outbreak in Shanghai, I saw many people speaking out online, but most of them disappeared after a short while," the maker of the video posted on WeChat Friday. "However, some things should not have happened, and they should not be forgotten."</p> <p>The personal plights, told in residents' own voices and overlay with black-and-white aerial footage of the city's silent skyline and empty streets, touched the hearts of millions of Chinese internet users as the video spread like wildfire across social media platforms on Friday evening.</p> <p>But for the Chinese government, the six-minute clip -- and the chaos and suffering it exposes -- is too powerful a reminder of the human cost of its zero-Covid policy, which authorities insist are "putting the people and their lives first."</p> <p>Censors quickly stepped in, taking down the film as well as any references to it from China's internet. On microblogging site Weibo, even the word "April" was <a href="#">temporarily restricted</a> from search results.</p> <p>The censorship sparked an outcry. Many were infuriated at the attempt by authorities to wipe out what they see as an objective documentation of the darker reality of the lockdown -- one that can rarely be found in state media.</p>

An online backlash ensued, with users joining a social media relay in defiance, sharing the video in whatever way they can come up with to evade censors. Some posted the video upside down, others embedded it in cartoon clips, and some circulated it through QR codes and cloud services. Censors struggled to keep up -- no sooner would they block one version of the video did another resurface, and the mouse and cat game continued into the small hours of Saturday.

Some even shared a clip of the song "Do You Hear the People Sing," a protest anthem from the 2012 movie *Les Misérables*.

The outpouring of anger reminded many of the public outcry two years ago following the death of Li Wenliang, a Wuhan doctor who was punished by police for sounding the alarm of the coronavirus and died of Covid-19.

"They are still trying to gag our mouths and plug our ears," a user [wrote](#) in the comment section of Li's Weibo page shortly after midnight on Saturday.

The online protest is the latest sign of growing discontent toward the harsh Covid containment measures among Shanghai residents, as well as people in other parts of China who have watched the crisis unfold in horror on social media.

But instead of relaxing lockdown measures, Shanghai authorities have tightened resolve to bring cases down to zero outside designated quarantine sites.

In the city's Pudong district, epidemic prevention authorities ordered "hard quarantine" to be installed in communities under the strictest level of lockdown -- namely those which reported Covid cases over the past week -- before Sunday, according to an official directive circulating online. On Saturday, Chinese social media was flooded with photos of workers in white hazmat suits installing green fences outside apartment buildings in Shanghai.

The tough new tactics have drawn more anger. "This kind of measures completely disregard fire safety. If a fire breaks out, rescue won't arrive on time, the consequences will be unimaginable. Who will be responsible for it then?" a Weibo user [commented](#).

The dysfunction and chaos of the Shanghai lockdown has put residents in other cities on alert.

In Beijing, residents rushed to buy groceries on Sunday evening amid a fresh coronavirus outbreak that officials described as "urgent and grim." The Chinese capital recorded 19 new local cases on Sunday, bringing the total in the city since Friday to 60.

Chaoyang, one of the city's largest districts, announced it would launch three rounds of mass testing of those who work and live in the district. Many fear that more stringent restrictions, such as a lockdown, could soon be implemented if more infections were detected.

Photos and videos shared online show long lines and empty shelves at Beijing supermarkets and "sold out" signs on grocery-delivery apps. On Weibo and Wechat, articles providing advice on what kind of food items and daily necessities to stock up on in case of a lockdown went viral.

The panic buying took place despite Beijing officials reassuring residents at a news conference earlier in the day that "the city's market supply for daily necessities is sufficient and trading is normal."

"At Beijing's fruit stores and supermarkets, everyone is panic buying. The section selling instant noodles is completely empty," a resident said on Weibo Monday. "The psychological shadow Shanghai has brought us may not go away for quite some time."

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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/04/23/north-korea-hack-crypto-access/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/04/23/north-korea-hack-crypto-access/</a>
GIST	<p>North Korean hackers who last month carried out one of the largest cryptocurrency thefts ever are still laundering their haul more than a week after they were identified as the thieves.</p> <p>The cybercriminals' continued access to the money, more than \$600 million stolen from the Axie Infinity video game, underscores the limits of law enforcement's ability to stop the flow of illicit cryptocurrency across the globe. The hackers are still moving their loot, most recently about \$4.5 million worth of the Ethereum currency on Friday, according to data from cryptocurrency tracking site Etherscan — eight days after the Treasury Department attempted to freeze those assets by sanctioning the digital wallet the group used in its attack.</p> <p>The gang, which the Treasury Department <a href="#">identified</a> as the Lazarus Group, also known for the 2014 hacking of Sony Pictures, so far has laundered nearly \$100 million — about 17 percent — of the stolen crypto, <a href="#">according</a> to blockchain analytics firm Elliptic. They moved their haul beyond the immediate reach of U.S. authorities by converting it into the cryptocurrency Ethereum, which unlike the cryptocurrency they stole cannot be hobbled remotely. Since then, the gang has worked to obscure the crypto's origins primarily by sending installments of it through a program called Tornado Cash, a service known as a mixer that pools digital assets to hide their owners.</p> <p>Authorities and major crypto industry players are scrambling to keep up. Treasury <a href="#">sanctioned</a> three more addresses associated with the gang on Friday, as Binance, a large international crypto exchange, <a href="#">announced</a> it had frozen \$5.8 million worth of crypto the hackers had transferred onto its platform.</p> <p>The cat-and-mouse game unfolding between law enforcement and the North Korean hackers is another example of how criminals have learned to target the growing crypto economy's weak points. They exploit faulty code in decentralized crypto platforms, use tools that help them hide their tracks such as converting assets to privacy-enhancing cryptocurrencies like Monero, and take advantage of spotty law enforcement coordination across international borders.</p> <p>The North Korean case also trains a spotlight on a crypto industry eager to demonstrate its trustworthiness to regulators, investors and customers, while retaining crypto's freewheeling ethos. Some of the largest companies in the sector say they welcome government oversight and tout their investments in internal compliance programs.</p> <p>Yet a review by The Washington Post of crypto accounts sanctioned by the Treasury Department over the last year-and-a-half found four wallets that remained free to transact months after being placed on the administration's blacklist. The apparent lapses are owed to flawed or incomplete compliance programs by Tether and Centre Consortium, a pair of companies involved in issuing so-called stablecoins, a type of cryptocurrency whose value is pegged to an external asset, typically the dollar.</p> <p>"We're at a particularly important moment: Everyone is still learning what's possible and how attacks might occur, and the borderless nature of crypto makes it difficult to enforce standards globally," said Chris DePow, a compliance official at Elliptic. "These are people acting all over the world. Even if you enforce very well in one jurisdiction, if there are other jurisdictions with weaker enforcement, you're still going to end up with a problem."</p> <p>Digital thieves are on track for a record-breaking year. They stole \$1.3 billion worth of cryptocurrency in the first three months of the year, after seizing \$3.2 billion in 2021, according to blockchain data firm Chainalysis. Hackers pulled off another major heist last Sunday, stealing about \$76 million worth of digital assets from a crypto project called Beanstalk, according to Etherscan data.</p> <p>As cybercriminals' successes mount, so does the urgency for U.S. authorities, who have come to view the attacks as threats to national security. The Lazarus Group, for one, is an important funding source for North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, according to United Nations investigators. And Russian hackers last spring temporarily hobbled the operations of a critical American fuel pipeline and the</p>

world's largest meat supplier, relenting only after collecting multimillion-dollar ransoms in cryptocurrency. (Much of the Colonial Pipeline ransom was later recovered.)

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has sharpened policymakers' focus on the issue. Some lawmakers have worried that Russian government and oligarchs could use crypto to evade the international sanctions choking off their access to traditional financial channels.

So far, they haven't. "It's hard to imagine that occurring using crypto," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Thursday. But the department is also signaling it is not taking chances. It leveled sanctions against Russian crypto mining firm Bitriver and 10 of its subsidiaries on Wednesday, explaining in a statement the Biden administration "is committed to ensuring that no asset, no matter how complex, becomes a mechanism for the Putin regime to offset the impact of sanctions."

U.S. authorities are also continuing to target Russian cybercriminals and the crypto platforms they rely on to enable their attacks. Earlier this month, U.S. law enforcement announced the shutdown of Russia-based Hydra Market, a dark net marketplace allegedly selling hacked personal info, drugs and hacking services.

As part of the crackdown, Treasury also sanctioned Garantex, a Russian crypto exchange that the department said had processed more than \$100 million in illegal transactions, including \$2.6 million associated with Hydra. Treasury said the move built on sanctions it enacted last year against two other Russian crypto exchanges, Suex and Chatex, which all operated out of the same office tower in Moscow's financial district.

The designations mean any crypto company interacting with the U.S. financial system should block transactions with the sanctioned entities, Elliptic's DePow said. Yet The Post's review found that neither Tether nor Centre Consortium have blocked all transactions involving sanctioned addresses.

Tether continues to allow transactions with crypto accounts that allegedly belong to Chatex, over half of whose business was tied to illicit or high-risk activities including ransomware attacks, according to Treasury. One Tether address received and then sent about \$15,000 as recently as April 19, according to a Post review of blockchain data from Etherscan. Another received, then sent, nearly \$42,000 in the past six months.

In a statement, Tether said that it "conducts constant market monitoring to ensure that there are no irregular movements or measures that might be in contravention of applicable international sanctions." Chatex didn't respond to requests for comment.

Not all transactions involving sanctioned addresses are nefarious: Sometimes mainstream exchanges consolidate funds held in sanctioned accounts that no longer benefit the accused hackers who formerly owned them. And sometimes Treasury approves individual transactions with sanctioned accounts

Separately, Centre Consortium — a joint venture between U.S. crypto companies Coinbase and Circle that issues USD Coin, the second-largest stablecoin — failed to freeze three wallets belonging to Russian hackers until months after Treasury sanctioned them. Two of the accounts, blacklisted in September 2020, belong to Artem Lifshits and Anton Andreyev, employees of the Russian hacking group that spearheaded the country's interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. A third was associated with Yevgeniy Polyanin, whom Treasury sanctioned in November for conducting ransomware attacks as part of the REvil cybercriminal gang.

Centre did not freeze those wallets until March 29, when a spokesman said the company conducted a review of sanctioned accounts and discovered it "just hadn't caught those addresses." The wallets didn't transact during that time.

"We're constantly reviewing what we're doing to ensure we're state of the art in our compliance," the Centre spokesperson said. "Through that review we identified three addresses that had been missed, and we acted immediately."

Treasury requires U.S. companies to freeze sanctioned accounts as soon as it blacklists them and report they have done so within 10 days, said John Smith, a former director of the department's Office of Foreign Assets Control and now a partner at Morrison & Foerster. The department can apply stiff penalties to violators even if they didn't know they were out of compliance, he said, though it tends to focus on more egregious cases.

"They go after entities or individuals they think intentionally or recklessly violated sanctions," Smith said.

A Treasury spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Neither did Tornado, when approached through a founder. That mixer is how whoever stole \$75 million from the Beanstalk project also laundered their proceeds. That has upset investor A.J. Pikul, who says he lost about \$150,000 in the hack. "I'm not super happy about the ability to launder funds through crypto at all, to be honest," he told The Post by email.

"I feel like we're in a digital arms race between the good guys and the bad guys," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 FBI warns of BlackCat ransomware</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/04/fbi-warns-of-blackcat-ransomware-that.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/04/fbi-warns-of-blackcat-ransomware-that.html</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is sounding the alarm on the BlackCat ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS), which it said victimized at least 60 entities worldwide between as of March 2022 since its emergence last November.</p> <p>Also called ALPHV and <a href="#">Noberus</a>, the ransomware is notable for being the first-ever malware written in the Rust programming language that's known to be memory safe and offer improved performance.</p> <p>"Many of the developers and money launderers for BlackCat/ALPHV are linked to <a href="#">DarkSide/BlackMatter</a>, indicating they have extensive networks and experience with ransomware operations," the FBI said in an <a href="#">advisory</a> published last week.</p> <p>The disclosure comes weeks after twin reports from <a href="#">Cisco Talos</a> and <a href="#">Kaspersky</a> uncovered links between BlackCat and BlackMatter ransomware families, including the use of a modified version of a data exfiltration tool dubbed Fendr that's been previously only observed in BlackMatter-related activity.</p> <p>"Aside from the developing advantages Rust offers, the attackers also take advantage of a lower detection ratio from static analysis tools, which aren't usually adapted to all programming languages," AT&amp;T Alien Labs <a href="#">pointed out</a> earlier this year.</p> <p>Like other RaaS groups, BlackCat's modus operandi involves the theft of victim data prior to the execution of the ransomware, with the malware often leveraging compromised user credentials to gain initial access to the target system.</p> <p>In a BlackCat ransomware incident <a href="#">analyzed</a> by Forescout's Vedere Labs, an internet-exposed SonicWall firewall was penetrated to gain initial access to the network, before moving to and encrypting a VMware ESXi virtual farm. The ransomware deployment is said to have taken place on March 17, 2022.</p> <p>The law enforcement agency, besides recommending victims to promptly report ransomware incidents, also said it doesn't encourage paying ransoms as there is no guarantee that this will enable the recovery of encrypted files. But it did acknowledge that victims may be compelled to heed to such demands to protect shareholders, employees, and customers.</p> <p>As recommendations, the FBI is urging organizations to review domain controllers, servers, workstations, and active directories for new or unrecognized user accounts, take offline backups, implement network segmentation, apply software updates, and secure accounts with multi-factor authentication.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Error in ALPHV/BlackCat ransomware code</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/error-in-alphv-blackcat-ransomware-code-may-offer-some-linux-users-a-shield">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/error-in-alphv-blackcat-ransomware-code-may-offer-some-linux-users-a-shield</a>
GIST	<p>Researchers at Forescout discovered a mechanism to stop current versions of ALPHV ransomware from deploying on most Linux systems.</p> <p>"As long as there's [a dummy binary called esxcli], the malware basically, basically hangs after that," said Daniel Dos Santos, head of research for Forescout.</p> <p>ALPHV, also known as BlackCat, recently emerged as a large player in the ransomware marketplace. The malware is an updated version of BlackMatter/Darkside, which the designers claim was spruced up by former programmers for that group and REvil. This week the FBI requested assistance from former victims in its investigation of the group.</p> <p>Breaking down the malware after an engagement, Forescout noted an interesting quirk. In any Linux attack, ALPHV requests VMWare ESXi hypervisor shut down all virtual machines through a binary called esxcli. If the call fails, ALPHV goes on encrypting the system as normal.</p> <p>But if a fake esxcli was set up to return "true" to any request, ALPHV becomes indefinitely stuck trying to shut down virtual machines. With a dummy binary set to do that, almost all Linux users can stop ALPHV attacks, at least until ALPHV patches their ransomware.</p> <p>Forescout could not find a way to make the trick work for ESXi users, who cannot have a dummy binary replace esxcli.</p> <p>"We stopped short of calling it something like a kill switch because it's not something that is fully applicable in general, yet, due to the ESXi cases" said Dos Santos. "It's not that it would be impossible to apply on ESXi. We just didn't find a safe way to do that."</p> <p>Other findings from the Forescout report include instructions for how to extract malware configurations, something that will be of use for incident response. The report also details a protocol used to distribute encryption across multiple instances of the malware across local systems. Dos Santos describes the protocol itself as simple, but note the inclusion of any protocol a more advanced feature for ransomware that has not been seen before.</p> <p>"It seems like they are experimenting with new stuff, like they're striving to do something that makes it more of a good — good is a difficult word to use, but it works well. It's malware that works well, that is that is efficient," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Attack cripples Costa Rica government</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/cyberattack-causes-chaos-costa-rica-government-systems">https://www.securityweek.com/cyberattack-causes-chaos-costa-rica-government-systems</a>
GIST	<p>Nearly a week into a ransomware attack that has crippled Costa Rican government computer systems, the country refused to pay a ransom as it struggled to implement workarounds and braced itself as hackers began publishing stolen information.</p> <p>The Russian-speaking Conti gang claimed responsibility for the attack, but the Costa Rican government had not confirmed its origin.</p> <p>The Finance Ministry was the first to report problems Monday. A number of its systems have been affected from tax collection to importation and exportation processes through the customs agency. Attacks</p>



on the social security agency's human resources system and on the Labor Ministry, as well as others followed.

The initial attack forced the Finance Ministry to shut down for several hours the system responsible for the payment of a good part of the country's public employees, which also handles government pension payments. It also has had to grant extensions for tax payments.

Conti had not published a specific ransom amount, but Costa Rica President Carlos Alvarado said, "The Costa Rican state will not pay anything to these cybercriminals." A figure of \$10 million circulated on social media platforms, but did not appear on Conti's site.

Costa Rican businesses fretted over confidential information provided to the government that could be published and used against them, while average citizens worried that personal financial information could be used to clean out their bank accounts.

Christian Rucavado, executive director of Costa Rica's Exporters Chamber, said the attack on the customs agency had collapsed the country's import and export logistics. He described a race against the clock for perishable items waiting in cold storage and said they still didn't have an estimate for the economic losses. Trade was still moving, but much more slowly.

"Some borders have delays because they're doing the process manually," Rucavado said. "We have asked the government for various actions like expanding hours so they can attend to exports and imports."

He said normally Costa Rica exports a daily average of \$38 million in products.

Allan Liska, an intelligence analyst with security firm Recorded Future, said that Conti was pursuing a double extortion: encrypting government files to freeze agencies' ability to function and posting stolen files to the group's extortion sites on the dark web if a ransom wasn't paid.

The first part can often be overcome if the systems have good backups, but the second is trickier depending on the sensitivity of the stolen data, he said.

Conti typically rents out its ransomware infrastructure to "affiliates" who pay for the service. The affiliate attacking Costa Rica could be anywhere in the world, Liska said.

A year ago, a Conti ransomware attack forced Ireland's health system to shut down its information technology system, cancelling appointments, treatments and surgeries.

Last month, Conti pledged its services in support of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The move angered cybercriminals sympathetic to Ukraine. It also prompted a security researcher who had long been surveilling Conti to leak a massive trove of internal communications among some Conti operators.

Asked why Central America's most stable democracy, known for its tropical wildlife and beaches, would be a target of hackers, Liska said the motivation usually has more to do with weaknesses. "They're looking for specific vulnerabilities," he said. "So the most likely explanation is that Costa Rica had a number of vulnerabilities and one of the ransomware actors discovered these vulnerabilities and was able to exploit it."

Brett Callow, a ransomware analyst at Emsisoft, said he looked at one of the leaked files from the Costa Rican finance ministry and "there doesn't seem to be much doubt that the data is legit."

On Friday, Conti's extortion site indicated it had published 50% of the stolen data. It said it included more than 850 gigabytes of material from Finance Ministry and other institutions' databases. "This is all ideal for phishing, we wish our colleagues from Costa Rica good luck in monetizing this data," it said.

That seemed to contradict Alvarado's assertion that the attack was not about money.

	<p>“My opinion is that this attack is not a money issue, but rather looks to threaten the country’s stability in a transition point,” he said, referring to his outgoing administration and the swearing in of Costa Rica’s new president May 8. “They will not achieve it.”</p> <p>Alvarado did allude to the possibility that the attack was motivated by Costa Rica’s public rejection of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. “You also can’t separate it from the complex global geopolitical situation in a digitalized world,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Bug hunters find 122 flaws DHS systems</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hack-dhs-bug-hunters-find-122-security-flaws-in-dhs-systems/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hack-dhs-bug-hunters-find-122-security-flaws-in-dhs-systems/</a>
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) today revealed that bug bounty hunters enrolled in its 'Hack DHS' bug bounty program have found 122 security vulnerabilities in external DHS systems, 27 of them rated critical severity.</p> <p>DHS awarded a total of \$125,600 to over 450 vetted security researchers and ethical hackers, with rewards of up to \$5,000 per bug, depending on the flaw's severity.</p> <p>"The enthusiastic participation by the security researcher community during the first phase of Hack DHS enabled us to find and remediate critical vulnerabilities before they could be exploited," said DHS Chief Information Officer Eric Hysen.</p> <p>"We look forward to further strengthening our relationship with the researcher community as Hack DHS progresses."</p> <p>The 'Hack DHS' program builds upon the experience of similar efforts across the US federal government (e.g., the 'Hack the Pentagon' program) and the private sector.</p> <p>DHS launched its first bug bounty pilot program in 2019, two years before 'Hack DHS,' after the <a href="#">SECURE Technology Act</a> was signed into law, requiring the establishment of a security vulnerability disclosure policy and a bounty program.</p> <p><b>Launched to develop a model for other govt organizations</b></p> <p>The 'Hack DHS' bug bounty program was <a href="#">announced in December 2021</a>. It requires the hackers to disclose their findings together with detailed information on the vulnerability, how it can be exploited, and how it can be used to gain access to data DHS systems.</p> <p>All reported security flaws are then verified by DHS security experts within 48 hours and are fixed in 15 days or more, depending on the bug's complexity.</p> <p>One week after the launch, the DHS <a href="#">expanded the scope of the 'Hack DHS' bounty program</a> to allow researchers to track down DHS systems impacted by Log4j-related vulnerabilities.</p> <p>The decision to expand the program came on the heels of <a href="#">a CISA emergency directive</a> ordering Federal Civilian Executive Branch agencies to patch their systems against the <a href="#">critical Log4Shell bug</a> until December 23.</p> <p>"Organizations of every size and across every sector, including federal agencies like the Department of Homeland Security, must remain vigilant and take steps to increase their cybersecurity," <a href="#">added</a> Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas.</p> <p>"Hack DHS underscores our Department's commitment to lead by example and protect our nation's networks and infrastructure from evolving cybersecurity threats."</p>

HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Chinese hackers in most zero-day exploits</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/chinese-hackers-behind-most-zero-day-exploits-during-2021/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/chinese-hackers-behind-most-zero-day-exploits-during-2021/</a>
GIST	<p>Threat analysts report that zero-day vulnerability exploitation is on the rise, with Chinese hackers using most of them in attacks last year.</p> <p>Zero-day vulnerabilities are security weaknesses in software products that are either unknown or have not been fixed at the time of discovery</p> <p>Zero-day disclosures are of particular interest to hackers because they have a wider exploitation window until vendors address the flaws and clients start applying the updates.</p> <p>Typically, this window of opportunity lasts for <a href="#">at least a couple of days</a>, and since not all admins apply security updates immediately, the number of vulnerable targets remains high for a while.</p> <p><b>2021 zero-day landscape</b></p> <p>According to an analysis from cybersecurity firm Mandiant, last year there were 80 cases of zero-days exploited in the wild, 18 more than 2020 and 2019 combined.</p> <p>Most of them were attributed to cyberespionage operations from state-backed actors.</p> <p>However, the company found that one out of three malicious actors exploiting zero-day vulnerabilities was financially motivated, a statistic that continues a growing trend from previous years.</p> <p>In terms of threat actors, China tops the list with eight zero-days used in cyberattacks in 2021, followed by Russia which used two, and North Korea with one.</p> <p>The most notable case was that of Hafnium, a Chinese state-sponsored hacking group that utilized <a href="#">four zero-day vulnerabilities</a> on the Microsoft Exchange servers to access email communications of Western organizations.</p> <p>Mandiant also recorded an uptick in ransomware operatives exploiting zero-day flaws to breach networks and deploy their file-encrypting payloads.</p> <p>One prominent example of this activity was that of <a href="#">HelloKitty ransomware</a> operators, who exploited a zero-day bug in SonicWall SMA 100 VPN appliances.</p> <p>The most targeted vendors in 2021 zero-day attacks were Microsoft, Apple, and Google, accounting for over 75% of all attacks.</p> <p>As <a href="#">BleepingComputer reported</a> recently, the number of mobile OS zero-days targeting Android and iOS is also on an ascending trend, going from under five in 2019 and 2020 to 17 in 2021.</p> <p><b>What to expect in 2022</b></p> <p>Last year saw a record break in zero-day exploitation, and current evidence indicates that it will be worse this year.</p> <p>“We suggest that significant campaigns based on zero-day exploitation are increasingly accessible to a wider variety of state-sponsored and financially motivated actors, including as a result of the proliferation of vendors selling exploits and sophisticated ransomware operations potentially developing custom exploits” - <a href="#">Mandiant</a></p>

	<p>Google's Project Zero team on Tuesday published a report on the same topic, underlining that the rise in zero-day exploitation is partly a result of <a href="#">greater visibility and detection</a> and not necessarily an increase of activity or attacks' complexity.</p> <p>As the report details, only two out of 58 new zero-days Project Zero disclosed in 2021 exhibit technical excellence and uniqueness, which could point to software security maturity.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 FBI: ransomware groups eye farm networks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/fbi-warns-agriculture-about-ransomware-attacks-timed-to-planting-harvest-seasons">https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/fbi-warns-agriculture-about-ransomware-attacks-timed-to-planting-harvest-seasons</a>
GIST	<p>Ransomware operators are eyeing attacks on large networks of farmers, called agriculture cooperatives, during make-or-break planting and harvest seasons, when they are likely most desperate to pay, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.</p> <p>A new advisory details previous attempts by threat actors since 2021 to disrupt agricultural co-op operations, including a <a href="#">Lockbit 2.0</a> attack on a critical farming supplier, and a July 2021 breach of a business management software company serving several agricultural cooperatives. Some of the attacks were successful and resulted in a production slowdown, the FBI says.</p> <p>Another successful attack could <a href="#">affect the entire food chain, the alert warns</a>.</p> <p>"Cyber actors may perceive cooperatives as lucrative targets with a willingness to pay due to the time-sensitive role they play in agricultural production," the alert says. "Although ransomware attacks against the entire farm-to-table spectrum of the FA sector occur on a regular basis, the number of cyber attacks against agricultural cooperatives during key seasons is notable."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 T-Mobile confirms Lapsus\$ network breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/t-mobile-confirms-lapsus-hackers-breached-internal-systems/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/t-mobile-confirms-lapsus-hackers-breached-internal-systems/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>T-Mobile has confirmed that the Lapsus\$ extortion gang breached its network "several weeks ago" using stolen credentials and gained access to internal systems.</p> <p>The telecommunications company added that it severed the cybercrime group's access to its network and disabled the credentials used in the hack after discovering the security breach.</p> <p>Per T-Mobile, the Lapsus\$ hackers didn't steal sensitive customer or government information during the incident.</p> <p>"Several weeks ago, our monitoring tools detected a bad actor using stolen credentials to access internal systems that house operational tools software," a T-Mobile spokesperson told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"The systems accessed contained no customer or government information or other similarly sensitive information, and we have no evidence that the intruder was able to obtain anything of value.</p> <p>"Our systems and processes worked as designed, the intrusion was rapidly shut down and closed off, and the compromised credentials used were rendered obsolete."</p> <p>Independent investigative journalist Brian Krebs <a href="#">first reported</a> the breach after reviewing leaked Telegram chat messages between Lapsus\$ gang members.</p> <p>While inside the mobile carrier's network, the cybercriminals were able to steal proprietary T-Mobile source code, according to Krebs.</p>

## T-Mobile hit by multiple breaches in the last several years

Since 2018, T-Mobile has disclosed six other data breaches, including one where hackers accessed data belonging to [3% of its customers](#).

One year later, in 2019, T-Mobile revealed that [it exposed prepaid customers' data](#), while in March 2020, unknown threat actors [gained access to T-Mobile employees' email accounts](#).

In December 2020, hackers also gained access to [customer proprietary network information \(phone numbers, call records\)](#), and in February 2021, [an internal T-Mobile application](#) was accessed without authorization by attackers.

Several months later, in August, attackers [brute-forced their way through T-Mobile's network](#) following a [breach of the carrier's testing environments](#).

In the wake of the August 2021 breach, T-Mobile unsuccessfully tried to stop the stolen data from being leaked online after paying the hackers \$270,000 through a third-party firm, per a [VICE report](#).

Last month, the New York State Office of the Attorney General (NY OAG) warned victims of T-Mobile's August data breach that [they're facing increased identity theft risks](#) after some of their stolen sensitive info ended up for sale on the dark web.

The New Jersey Cybersecurity & Communications Integration Cell (NJCCIC) also notified T-Mobile customers earlier this month of an [unblockable SMS phishing campaign](#) likely targeting them using info stolen in past data breaches.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Russian hackers money-laundering options</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-hackers-are-seeking-alternative-money-laundering-options/?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russian-hackers-are-seeking-alternative-money-laundering-options/?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>The Russian cybercrime community, one of the most active and prolific in the world, is turning to alternative money-laundering methods due to sanctions on Russia and law enforcement actions against dark web markets.</p> <p>Although the options are few, cybecriminals are discussing viable solutions to cash out or safe keep stolen funds and cryptocurrency, analysts at <a href="#">Flashpoint</a> observed in conversations from threat actors.</p> <p><b>A "perfect storm"</b></p> <p>First came the <a href="#">bank sanctions</a> and the blocking of SWIFT payments, a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This crippled the regular channels for cash flows used by cybercriminals.</p> <p>Then came the suspension of Russian operations of direct money transfer services such as <a href="#">Western Union</a> and <a href="#">MoneyGram</a>. Scammers and extortionists typically used those to receive payments from victims without revealing their real identity.</p> <p>On April 5, the servers of Hydra Market, the largest Russian darknet platform, were <a href="#">seized by the German police</a>, taking down a massive business (over \$1.35 billion annual turnover) that also sustained money-laundering services.</p> <p>The following day, the U.S. <a href="#">sanctioned Garantex</a>, one of the most important platforms Russian cybercriminals used for laundering stolen funds, which followed a <a href="#">wave of sanctions</a> on similar platforms <a href="#">starting in 2021</a>.</p>

Finally, yesterday, Binance became the first large cryptocurrency exchange to essentially [ban Russian users](#) from performing transactions or investments, and more are expected to follow soon. Even coin mining operations of significant size in Russia [are being sanctioned](#).

### **Cybercriminals turn to China**

According to Flashpoint data collected from cybercriminal forums, Russian hackers have mostly turned to Chinese payment systems, including Chinese banks and the Union Pay cards system.

However, even Union Pay is [now considering](#) to refuse serving Russian customers, so the option is not viable on a longer term.

Since bank problems arose, a new category of money launderers has emerged, offering money routes through banks in countries like Armenia, Vietnam, or China, that have not imposed sanctions on Russian banks.

Cryptocurrency exchanges with rising KYC (known your customer) requirements, even those within Russia, are not an option, so darknet coin-mixing and cash-out services are among the few options available.

Since the money-laundering providers on Hydra no longer have a stable place to advertise their services, crooks are reduced to turning to smaller, less trustworthy operations.

Flashpoint says some cybercriminals responded to this situation by adopting a long term approach and investing in gold or storing their cryptocurrency in cold wallets until the conditions change.

The situation is unlikely to have an impact on financially-motivated threat activity, though. Lower-tier threat groups and less capable hackers will be impacted the most, but the private laundering channels established by more sophisticated groups are likely to continue to operate.

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HEADLINE	04/22 Hackers 'DeFi' threat risk; new vectors
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/hackers-defi-threat-risk-expectations-with-new-attack-vectors-in-crypto?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/hackers-defi-threat-risk-expectations-with-new-attack-vectors-in-crypto?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Decentralized finance (DeFi) platforms have gained a lot of traction in recent years. Unfortunately, they have also gained a lot of attention from bad actors.</p> <p>Indeed, cryptocurrency transfers from illegal digital wallets to <a href="#">DeFi platforms</a> skyrocketed nearly 2,000% between 2020 and 2021 alone, according to <a href="#">research from Chainalysis</a>. Although malfeasance may be waning, the use of cryptocurrency and DeFi networks is booming. Last year, 2021, was found to be the last year in three years where cryptocurrency exchanges did not process more than half of their transactions for bad actors, <a href="#">according to Chainalysis</a>.</p> <p>"I think this year is the year of DeFi coming into criminal activity — not only in the sense that DeFi protocols are being hacked," said Chainalysis Director of Research Kim Grauer in a prepared release, "but also the way criminals are utilizing DeFi protocols to launder money."</p> <p>Chainalysis found \$8.6 billion in cryptocurrency transferred from illicit wallets to services in 2021.</p> <p>James McQuiggan, security awareness advocate at <a href="#">KnowBe4</a>, said that DeFi platforms are becoming all the more appealing to cyber criminals as they get bigger.</p> <p>"[Bad actors] now turn to cryptocurrency and exchange organizations to infiltrate using social engineering attacks or targeting vulnerable perimeter systems that are not up to date on security updates or exposed to other exploits," McQuiggan said.</p>



According to broader research, this is a widening problem for crypto finance in general.

Almost [\\$3.2 billion has been snatched](#) through DeFi systems, with [\\$1.3 billion taken](#) in the first quarter of this year alone. Just two years ago, less than one-third (30%) of stolen digital data came from DeFi. The vast majority, 97%, of cryptocurrency taken this year has been stolen from DeFi platforms — not exchanges, according to Chainalysis research.

Case in point: DeFi systems like Beanstalk, which was recently hacked, are still relatively new and act as an enticing opportunity for hackers to take advantage of its emerging security protocols, according to Jim Ducharme, chief operating officer at Outseer, which manages payment verification.

“Although a decentralized financial system sounds appealing to many, storing such sensitive information across a wide network of ledgers creates more openings for hackers to slip in undetected and steal large sums of money in the blink of an eye,” Ducharme said.

Tari Schreider, strategic adviser for Aite-Novarica, said that while DeFi systems are “evolving almost daily, there is little history to look back on.”

Hence “cyber heists” like the recent Beanstalk intrusion are “grifts” where the attackers are exploiting openings in these emerging systems.

However, even if these emerging payment platforms begin to embrace a more traditional approach to security “defining rules around how financial systems operate whether crypto-based or traditional quickly gets complex, and complexity introduces the potential for unforeseen consequences,” said Chris Clements, vice president of solutions architecture at [Cerberus Sentinel](#).

In the traditional financial world, there are inherent inefficiencies and safeguards — with many that came from painful experiences — to prevent or reverse damaging transactions even if they technically “follow the rules,” Clements said. In the emerging crypto world, he continued, there is an “astronomical amount of money that can be compromised from finding a mistake in a smart contract, creating an incredibly compelling target for attackers.”

These DeFi incidents (like Beanstalk) may come with advantages as well as risks.

“With hundreds of millions up for grabs, this is going to attract scrutiny not just from the smartest hackers in the world, but also large-scale organized crime and even nation-states,” according to Clements. “This doesn’t even account for the potential of insider sabotage by intentionally introducing such vulnerabilities. The motivation is staggering in scale.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 BBB: crypto scams in WA near \$8M 2021</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-bbb-cryptocurrency-scam-consumers/281-1cd03c35-e7cc-457b-a4c2-b6404d68681a">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/washington-bbb-cryptocurrency-scam-consumers/281-1cd03c35-e7cc-457b-a4c2-b6404d68681a</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — In 2021, the <a href="#">Better Business Bureau</a> said it received just fewer than 2,500 complaints about financial losses linked to cryptocurrency scams. Those losses totaled just shy of \$8 million.</p> <p>"We also received just over 1,200 scam checker reports with losses just shy, again, of \$8 million," said Logan Hickle, BBB of Washington public relations and communications manager. "Then, we also received 579 negative reviews from cryptocurrency companies themselves."</p> <p>Hickle said the Federal Trade Commission estimated \$750 million in cryptocurrency losses in 2021 and in 2020, the FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center estimated \$246 million in losses.</p> <p>To protect themselves, Hickle said people need to be aware that there are two common protections that don't apply to cryptocurrency at the moment, and that's credit card charge production and FDIC insurance.</p>

	<p>Falling victim to a cryptocurrency scam is not much different than long-running scams people have reported to the BBB for several years.</p> <p>"Someone may message you on social media looking to strike up a relationship and after a few days or weeks of getting to know you, they may say, 'Hey, I've made all this money investing with cryptocurrency, why don't you invest here?' Hickle said. "You also want to be very very careful if someone is specifically asking you to pay for something in cryptocurrency. That is a huge red flag and no one with the government will ever ask for this form of payment."</p> <p>For more cryptocurrency safety reminders including how to spot email phishing scams, watch the interview in the video player above.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<i>To view the BBB's report on cryptocurrency scams, <a href="#">click here</a>.</i>

HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Binance built ties to FSB-linked agency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/technology/how-crypto-giant-binance-built-ties-russian-fsb-linked-agency-2022-04-22/">https://www.reuters.com/technology/how-crypto-giant-binance-built-ties-russian-fsb-linked-agency-2022-04-22/</a>
GIST	<p>VILNIUS, April 22 (Reuters) - In April 2021, Russia's financial intelligence unit met in Moscow with the regional head of Binance, the world's largest crypto exchange. The Russians wanted Binance to agree to hand over client data, including names and addresses, to help them fight crime, according to text messages the company official sent to a business associate.</p> <p>At the time, the agency, known as Rosfinmonitoring or Rosfin, was seeking to trace millions of dollars in bitcoin raised by jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, a person familiar with the matter said. Navalny, whose network Rosfinmonitoring added that month to a list of terrorist organisations, said the donations were used to finance efforts to expose corruption inside President Vladimir Putin's government.</p> <p>Binance's head of Eastern Europe and Russia, Gleb Kostarev, consented to Rosfin's request to agree to share client data, the messages showed. He told the business associate that he didn't have "much of a choice" in the matter.</p> <p>Kostarev didn't comment for this article. Binance told Reuters it had never been contacted by Russian authorities regarding Navalny. It said that before the war it was "actively seeking compliance in Russia," which would have required it to respond to "appropriate requests from regulators and law enforcement agencies."</p> <p>The encounter, which has not been previously reported, was part of behind-the-scenes efforts by Binance to build ties with Russian government agencies as it sought to boost its growing business in the country, Reuters reporting shows. This account of those efforts is based on interviews with over 10 people familiar with Binance's operations in Russia, including former employees, ex-business partners and crypto industry executives, and a review of text messages that Kostarev sent to people outside the company.</p> <p>Binance has continued to operate in Russia since Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, despite requests from the government in Kyiv to Binance and other exchanges to ban Russian users. Other major payment and fintech companies, such as PayPal and American Express, have halted services in Russia since the Kremlin launched what it calls a "special operation" to demilitarise and "denazify" Ukraine. One of Binance's main rivals in Russia, EXMO.com, said on Monday it would no longer serve Russian and Belarusian clients and was selling its Russia business. Some smaller crypto exchanges remain.</p> <p>CEO Changpeng Zhao, widely known by his initials CZ, has said he is against the war and "politicians, dictators that start the wars" but not against "the people on both sides of Ukraine and Russia that are suffering." Zhao didn't comment for this article. Binance referred Reuters to Zhao's previous statements on the matter.</p>

Legal representatives for Binance told Reuters that "active engagement with the Russian government has now stopped due to the conflict." On Thursday Binance told users it was limiting services for major clients in Russia because of the latest European Union sanctions on Moscow.

Binance's trading volumes in Russia have boomed since the war began, data from a top industry research firm shows, as Russians turned to crypto to protect their assets from Western sanctions and a devaluing rouble. In one recent message to an industry contact, Kostarev said Binance's priority was to ensure the market stayed open, so the exchange wasn't "making a fuss." He didn't elaborate.

Asked by Reuters to clarify Kostarev's message, Binance said the war and economic crisis could accelerate crypto's adoption among working-class Russian citizens looking for alternative payment means. Binance added that it is aggressively applying sanctions imposed by Western governments, but would not unilaterally "freeze millions of innocent users' accounts."

## THE FREEDOM OF MONEY

Since its launch five years ago in Shanghai, Binance has grown to dominate the unregulated Russian crypto sector with an estimated four-fifths of all trading volumes, market data shows. Binance said it doesn't comment on "external data projections" and, as a private company, doesn't share such information publicly.

Zhao, in 2019, told Russians that Binance's mission there was to increase the "freedom of money" and "protect users." Russians flocked to the platform, seeing it as an alternative to a banking system closely monitored by a state they distrusted.

In line with a draft law to regulate crypto companies, Binance agreed with Rosfinmonitoring to set up a local unit in Russia through which authorities can request client data, the Kostarev messages reviewed by Reuters show. Asked whether it had proceeded to set up this local unit, Binance responded, "Should we consider establishing a local entity in Russia in the future, Binance will never share data without a legitimate law enforcement request."

Navalny's chief of staff, Leonid Volkov, told Reuters that Russia's proposed regulatory framework could let the Kremlin identify the opposition group's crypto donors. Since Navalny's arrest in January 2021, his anti-corruption foundation has publicly encouraged backers to donate via Binance, telling them this was the safest way to do so because, unlike with bank transfers, authorities would not know donors' identities.

"These people will be in danger," said Volkov, who runs the foundation from Lithuania. If Binance wants to protect its customers, Volkov went on, it should "never do anything with the Russian government." The Kremlin declined to comment on Navalny's crypto fundraising or Binance's operations.

In response to Reuters' questions, Binance said that before the war it was supportive of legislation that would bring clarity to regulation. But the Ukraine conflict and Western sanctions on many Russian banks had made it "virtually impossible for any platform to initiate or consider future plans in the region."

People close to Binance said it supported the draft law because, once passed, crypto exchanges would be required to partner with Russian banks, allowing customers to deposit and trade significantly more funds.

The finance ministry said in early April it had finished drafting its "bill on the regulation of digital currencies." People involved in the discussions say the government wants to move quickly to write the bill into law. One lawmaker told parliament's official newspaper last month the crypto legislation would help mitigate damage to the Russian economy from sanctions.

Among the agencies helping develop the law is Rosfinmonitoring, responsible for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Though nominally independent, it acts as an arm of the Federal Security Service (FSB), the main successor to the Soviet-era KGB, five people who have interacted with Rosfin

said. Rosfin's director, Yury Chikhanchin, is a security services veteran, according to his official biography.

Marshall Billingslea, a former head of the Financial Action Task Force, a global watchdog which sets standards for authorities combating financial crime, told a conference last year that Rosfin was "firmly under control of the FSB" to ensure that only state-sanctioned transactions were made into and out of Russia. Billingslea said it was "no surprise" to see Rosfin declare Navalny's network a terrorist organisation after his arrest.

Rosfin, in a written response to Reuters' questions, said it fully complies with international standards of operational independence in areas including regulating the activities of virtual asset service providers. Chikhanchin didn't comment.

At least one other crypto exchange did not agree to provide client data to Rosfin due to concerns about how the information could be used and the FSB's influence on the unit, according to a person familiar with the discussions. Others in Russia's crypto sector said they were also sceptical about the draft law.

"No one knows if the proposed local office system will be used for good or bad," said Mike Bystroff, a partner at the Moscow-based Digital Rights Center law firm, who represented Binance when it successfully challenged a ban on its website in January 2021.

Binance's willingness to engage with Rosfin through 2021 contrasted with its approach elsewhere. Some national regulators have accused the company of withholding information. Britain's regulator said in August last year a Binance UK unit was "not capable of being effectively supervised" after it refused to answer questions about Binance's global business. Liechtenstein's regulator, in a 2020 report, said Binance's dealings with the body were "non-transparent" as it declined to provide financial information on request. In an article published in January, Reuters reported that Binance cancelled plans to seek a licence in Malta in 2019 due to Zhao's concerns about the level of financial disclosure required.

Lawyers for Binance said it was "false equivalency" to conflate "distinct issues of our client's responsiveness to law enforcement disclosure requests, with licensing applications for its own business that would involve wholly different types of disclosures." Binance said it was "the most active participant in the industry" working with law enforcement to "develop best practices, mitigate/thwart new methods of criminality and prevent illicit proceeds from entering the marketplace."

Binance said any suggestion that it refuses to share data with authorities making legitimate requests is "absolutely false." It said it has strict policies and procedures to assess such requests and reserves the right to decline "when there is no legal purpose."

**"DON'T BE AFRAID"**

Zhao first travelled to Russia as Binance CEO in October 2019. At a tech forum in Moscow, he told an audience to stop being "a slave" to traditional finance. His slideshow cited the 18th century philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "A man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains."

Binance targeted Russia for expansion, noting in a 2018 blog post the country's "hyperactive" crypto community. The exchange partnered with Belize-based payment company Advcash to enable users to deposit and withdraw roubles using bank cards. Advcash said the partnership is still active.

Binance gradually took a commanding share of the Russian crypto market. By mid-2021, Binance's trading volumes in Russia had made it the exchange's second-largest market globally after China, including among "VIP" clients who trade large amounts of crypto, a person with direct knowledge of the company's data said. In March this year, Binance processed almost 80% of all rouble-to-crypto trades, according to data from researcher CryptoCompare, worth some 85 billion roubles (\$1.1 billion).

"People just trusted it. It was always a step ahead of competitors," said Maksim Sukhonosik, a Russian crypto trader and co-founder of blockchain consulting firm Colibri Group.

However, in 2020, Binance began drawing the attention of Russian authorities, who were at the time hostile to cryptocurrencies. Russia's communications watchdog banned its website for allegedly carrying prohibited material about buying crypto. Binance challenged the decision in court and the ban was withdrawn in January 2021, according to statements Binance posted in its Telegram group for Russian users.

Binance told Reuters the lawsuit was dismissed on procedural grounds because the firm wasn't properly notified. The regulator did not respond to requests to comment.

Navalny was arrested that month on his return to Russia, after recovering from poisoning with the nerve agent Novichok. He, along with the U.S. and British governments, blamed the FSB for the attack, an accusation Russia rejects. The FSB did not respond to questions for this article.

A core part of Russian prosecutors' case against Navalny was the financing of his foundation. At his trial, they accused him of stealing over 350 million roubles, then worth some \$4.8 million, that the foundation received as donations. Navalny denied the charge. Volkov told Reuters that security forces interrogated thousands of supporters who donated through Russian banks. None of these donors had used digital currencies, he said.

Navalny's crypto fundraising surged after his arrest. The more than 670 bitcoin that supporters have donated via Binance and other exchanges would now be worth almost \$28 million, according to blockchain data, though Volkov said the real amount raised is less because the bitcoins were sold upon receipt at a lower price.

When a Russian court outlawed Navalny's foundation in June 2021, ruling it to be an "extremist organisation," the network told supporters on Twitter to "learn how to use cryptocurrencies" and recommended they open Binance accounts. In a later how-to guide, the foundation advised donors to upload identity cards to Binance to verify their accounts, noting there were no instances yet of any crypto exchange providing information to Russian authorities. "You don't need to be afraid," the guide said.

After the explosion in Navalny's bitcoin donations, the FSB started exploring how to identify his crypto donors, according to the person familiar with the matter. The FSB, the person said, instructed Rosfin to find a way to achieve that goal. Responding to questions from Reuters, Rosfin said it is prohibited from disclosing measures to combat terrorist financing. It said Navalny was involved in "terrorist activity."

#### "OUT OF THE SHADOWS"

In April 2021, a Russian non-profit organisation called the Digital Economy Development Fund invited Binance to a private meeting with Rosfin at a government building in Moscow, according to the invitation seen by Reuters. The organisation is headed by a former top advisor to Putin on internet policy, German Klimenko, and was set up in 2019 to develop Russian technologies. The fund's website says one of its partners is the Russian trade and industry ministry. Kostarev, the Binance director, chairs the fund's committee on digital currencies.

Neither the Digital Economy Development Fund nor Klimenko responded to emails seeking comment.

Another exchange, OKX, originally Chinese but now based in the Seychelles, was also invited, a person familiar with the meeting said. An OKX spokesperson said the company declined the invitation, without giving a reason.

At the meeting, according to Kostarev's messages, Rosfin said it wanted exchanges to register with the agency so they could receive its requests for client information. Kostarev wrote to the business associate to

say he didn't view the demand as a problem. He told the associate the FSB was interested in crypto, too. He didn't elaborate.

Asked about Kostarev's meeting with Rosfin, Binance said, "We did not work with, collaborate, nor partner with that organization." Five months later, Rosfin sent Binance a questionnaire, reviewed by Reuters, seeking more information on the exchange's background checks on clients and its "preferred channel of communication" with authorities for requests on crypto transactions. Asked about this communication, the firm said, "Binance takes its compliance obligations seriously and welcomes opportunities to consult with regulators."

Kostarev told the business associate in a message around the time of the questionnaire that Binance was stepping up efforts to engage with the government on crypto regulation. Rosfin was prepared to support Binance in this, Kostarev wrote.

But the Russian central bank was opposed to Moscow regulating cryptocurrencies and allowing the market to flourish out of concern that it would encourage criminal activity. Many of the world's central banks, whose mission includes controlling money supply, have similar qualms about the wild world of crypto. Governor Elvira Nabiullina told Russia's parliament in November "a responsible state should not stimulate their distribution." A spokeswoman for the central bank declined to comment.

In January of this year, Binance announced it had hired a senior central bank official, Olga Goncharova, as a director for the Greater Russia region. Goncharova would build "systematic interaction" with authorities in Russia, Binance said.

After Nabiullina proposed a ban on crypto use on Russian territory later that month, Kostarev told the business associate in a message that Binance was "in a war" with the central bank. All other Russian government agencies wanted to legalise digital currencies, Kostarev said. Support for crypto was indeed building in Moscow. Following Nabiullina's call for a ban, a top official at the finance ministry publicly backed the law that would require crypto exchanges to turn over names of their customers, saying it was necessary to ensure "transparency."

Putin then intervened. In a televised meeting with ministers on Jan. 26, he asked the government and central bank to reach a "unanimous opinion" on crypto regulation. He noted Russia had "certain competitive advantages" in the sector, such as surplus electricity, the most crucial input for the power-hungry creation of cryptocurrency.

Two weeks later, the government approved a plan for crypto regulation, drawn up by agencies including Rosfin and the FSB, that would bring the "industry out of the shadows."

Kostarev tweeted in response to an article on the announcement, "Finally some good news."

In a document describing the proposed regulatory framework, the government said that without such a system law enforcement "will not be able to respond effectively to offences and crimes." The government would create a database of cryptocurrency wallets related to terrorism financing, the government said, and exchanges would have to disclose information about their customers to Rosfin. The finance ministry submitted an early version of the draft law on Feb. 18.

Six days later, Russian forces invaded Ukraine. Binance's rouble trading exploded as Western nations imposed sanctions on Russia and the Kremlin limited foreign currency withdrawals. CryptoCompare's data shows Binance's average daily volume for rouble transactions for the initial three weeks of the war was almost four times higher than during the month before.

On Binance's Russian Telegram group, some volunteer customer representatives, known as Binance Angels, endorsed traders' posts thanking Binance for not blocking accounts, including one message asking Binance not to "fall for this war crap." Binance has enlisted hundreds of Angels around the world to promote the exchange to local crypto traders.



"Binance does not interfere in politics," one Angel wrote. Binance told Reuters that Angels are not spokespeople for the company.

Binance also drew praise from Putin's United Russia party. One lawmaker, Alexander Yakubovsky, speaking to the official parliament newspaper on March 14, called Binance the "leading experts in our country" advising politicians on crypto regulation. The company "is under strong pressure from countries unfriendly to Russia," he said. Binance said they had never met or communicated with Yakubovsky and his opinions were his own.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Belarus railway saboteurs thwart Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/23/ukraine-belarus-railway-saboteurs-russia/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/04/23/ukraine-belarus-railway-saboteurs-russia/</a>
GIST	<p>When Russian troops first streamed across the Belarusian border into Ukraine for what they had assumed would be a lightning assault on Kyiv, they were intending to rely on the region's extensive rail network for supplies and reinforcements.</p> <p>The Russians hadn't taken into account the railway saboteurs of Belarus.</p> <p>Starting in the earliest days of the invasion in February, a clandestine network of railway workers, hackers and dissident security forces went into action to disable or disrupt the railway links connecting Russia to Ukraine through Belarus, wreaking havoc on Russian supply lines.</p> <p>The attacks have drawn little attention outside Belarus amid the drama of the Russian onslaught and the bloody aftermath of Russia's humiliating <a href="#">retreat</a>. Fierce Ukrainian resistance and <a href="#">tactical errors</a> by an ill-prepared Russian force were likely enough to thwart Russia's plans, analysts say.</p> <p>But the Belarus railway saboteurs can at least claim a role in fueling the logistical chaos that quickly engulfed the Russians, leaving troops <a href="#">stranded</a> on the front lines without food, fuel and ammunition within days of the invasion.</p> <p>Alexander Kamyshin, head of Ukrainian railways, expressed Ukraine's gratitude to the Belarusian saboteurs. "They are brave and honest people who have helped us," he said.</p> <p>The attacks were simple but effective, targeting the signal control cabinets essential to the functioning of the railways, members of the activist network said. For days on end, the movement of trains was paralyzed, forcing the Russians to attempt to resupply their troops by road and contributing to the snarl-up that stalled the infamous 40-mile military <a href="#">convoy</a> north of Kyiv.</p> <p>How much of the chaos can be attributed to the sabotage and how much to poor logistical planning by the Russians is hard to tell, especially as there is no independent media reporting from Belarus, said Emily Ferris, a research fellow at the London-based Royal United Services Institute. But without automated signaling, trains were forced to slow to a crawl and the number of them traveling on the tracks at any one time would have been severely restricted, she said.</p> <p>"Given the Russian reliance on trains, I'm sure it contributed to some of the problems they had in the north. It would have slowed down their ability to move," she said. "They couldn't push further into Ukrainian territory and snarled their supply lines because they had to rely on trucks."</p> <p>The attacks also bought time for Ukrainian troops to formulate an effective response to the Russian invasion, said Yury Ravavoi, a Belarusian activist and trade unionist who escaped to Poland under threat of arrest during the anti-government protests that rocked Belarus in 2020.</p> <p>"I can't say we were the most important factor, but we were an important brick in the wall," he said.</p>

The saboteurs drew inspiration from an earlier episode in Belarusian history, during World War II, when Belarusians opposed to the Nazi occupation blew up railway lines and train stations to disrupt German supply lines. The Rail War, as it is known, is venerated as a moment of triumph for Belarus, taught in schools as the most successful of the tactics deployed by resistance fighters that eased the way for Soviet troops to drive the Germans out.

Eight decades later, it is Russia's presence in Belarus that has stirred dissent. The deployment of tens of thousands of Russian troops in Belarus in preparation for the invasion of Ukraine triggered widespread domestic opposition and rekindled opposition networks formed during the 2020 protests against Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, said Hanna Liubakova, a Belarusian journalist living in exile in Lithuania.

This second Rail War has taken a more benign form than its predecessor. The partisans were keen not to inflict casualties, Ravavoi said. So they focused their attacks on damaging equipment to stop the railways from functioning.

"We didn't want to kill any Russian army or Belarusian train drivers. We used a peaceful way to stop them," he said.

He and other Belarusians involved in organizing the attacks decline to reveal precise details of how the attacks were carried out and by whom, citing the need for secrecy and concerns for the safety of the railway partisans, as the saboteurs are loosely known.

Three main groups have been involved, representing railway workers, security force defectors and cyber specialists, said Lt. Col Alexander Azarov, a former security official living in Warsaw who heads the security force group called [Bypol](#).

Railway employees sympathetic to the partisans have leaked details of Russian movements and the locations of key railway infrastructure to a group called the [Community of Railway Workers](#), which shares them on Telegram channels. Supporters on the ground link up to carry out the attacks, but there is no formal chain of command, Azarov said.

"Our movement is not centralized," he said. "It's not like there's a leader of the resistance. It's horizontal, with dozens of groups working on the ground."

The third group, the [Cyber Partisans](#), is formed of exiled Belarusian IT professionals who have carried out several cyberattacks on the Belarusian government since joining in 2020.

The Cyber Partisans launched the first attack, hacking into the railway's computer network in the days leading up to the invasion and snarling rail traffic before Russian troops had even crossed the border. Infiltrating the railway network's computers was relatively easy, said Yuliana Shemetovets, a spokesperson for the group, which is based in New York, because the railway company is still using Windows XP, an outdated version of the software that contains many vulnerabilities.

Starting on Feb. 26, two days after the invasion began, a succession of five sabotage attacks against signaling cabinets brought train traffic to an almost complete halt, said Sergey Voitekhovich, a former railway employee now based in Poland who is a leader in the Community of Railway Workers.

By Feb. 28, satellite photographs began to appear of the 40-mile convoy of Russian trucks and tanks ostensibly headed from Belarus toward Kyiv. Within a week, the convoy had completely stalled as vehicles ran out of fuel or broke down.

The Belarusian authorities have since launched an intense effort to prevent attacks and hunt down the saboteurs. The Interior Ministry has decreed that damaging railway infrastructure is an act of terrorism, a crime that carries a 20-year prison term.

Dozens of railway workers have been randomly detained and their phones searched for evidence that they were in touch with the partisans, the activists say. At least 11 Belarusians are in custody, accused of participating in the attacks, according to human rights groups.

In early April, security police captured three alleged saboteurs near the town of Bobruisk and shot them in the knees. State television broadcast footage of the bleeding men, their knees bandaged, and claimed they had been shot while resisting arrest.

The shootings have had a chilling effect on the saboteur network, Azarov said. Belarusian troops are patrolling and drones have been deployed to monitor the railway lines. “It has become too dangerous to do attacks,” he said.

But by the time of the police shooting, Russia’s withdrawal from the area around Kyiv was in full swing and the Kremlin had announced it would refocus its military effort on capturing the east of Ukraine. The majority of the Russian troops that entered Ukraine from Belarus are now in the process of being redeployed to the east, the Pentagon says.

“We believe the fact that the Russians gave up on taking Kyiv is a result of our work because the Russians didn’t feel as safe in Belarus as they had expected,” said Franak Viacorka, spokesman for Belarusian opposition leader [Svetlana Tikhanovskaya](#). “Thousands of Russian troops didn’t receive food, they didn’t receive fuel, and they didn’t receive equipment on time.”

Now, a new phase in the rail war may be underway. In recent days the railway activists have posted on Telegram photographs of damage to signaling cabinets along Russian railway lines being used to transport troops into eastern Ukraine. The attacks can’t be independently confirmed, but Voitekhovich claimed members of his railway network are involved. “There are open borders between Belarus and Russia,” he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Hackers claim to target Russia institutions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/us/politics/hackers-russia-cyberattacks.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/us/politics/hackers-russia-cyberattacks.html</a>
GIST	<p>Hackers claim to have broken into dozens of Russian institutions over the past two months, including the Kremlin’s internet censor and one of its primary intelligence services, leaking emails and internal documents to the public in an apparent hack-and-leak campaign that is remarkable in its scope.</p> <p>The hacking operation comes as the Ukrainian government appears to have begun a parallel effort to punish Russia by publishing the names of supposed Russian soldiers who operated in Bucha, <a href="#">the site of a massacre of civilians</a>, and agents of the F.S.B., a major Russian intelligence agency, along with identifying information like dates of birth and passport numbers. It is unclear how the Ukrainian government obtained those names or whether they were part of the hacks.</p> <p>Much of the data released by the hackers and the Ukrainian government is by its nature impossible to verify. As an intelligence agency, the F.S.B. would never confirm a list of its officers. Even the groups distributing the data have warned that the files swiped from Russian institutions could contain malware, manipulated or faked information, and other tripwires.</p> <p>Some of the data may also be recycled from previous leaks and presented as new, <a href="#">researchers have said</a>, in an attempt to artificially increase the hackers’ credibility. Or some of it could be manufactured — something that has happened before in the ongoing cyberconflict between Russia and Ukraine, which dates back more than a decade.</p> <p>But the hacking effort appears to be part of a campaign by those opposing the Kremlin to help in the war effort by making it extremely difficult for Russian spies to operate abroad and by planting a seed of fear in the minds of soldiers that they could be held to account for human rights abuses.</p>

Dmitri Alperovitch, a founder of the Silverado Policy Accelerator, a Washington think tank, and the former chief technology officer at the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, said there was reason to maintain a healthy skepticism about the reliability of some of the leaks.

But he added that the hacking campaign “once again may prove that in the age of pervasive cyberintrusions and the generation of vast amounts of digital exhaust by nearly every person in a connected society, no one is able to hide and avoid identification for egregious war crimes for long.”

The leaks also demonstrate Ukraine’s willingness to join forces with [amateur hackers](#) in its cyberwar against Russia. In early March, Ukrainian officials rallied volunteers for hacking projects, and the Ukrainian government has been publishing information about its opponents on official websites. A channel on the messaging platform Telegram that lists targets for the volunteers to hack has grown to more than 288,000 members.

American intelligence officials say they believe that hackers operating in Russia and Eastern Europe have now been split into at least two camps. Some, like Conti, a major ransomware group that was itself hacked in late February, have pledged fealty to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Others, mostly from Eastern Europe, have been offended by the Russian invasion, and particularly the killings of civilians, and have sided with the government of President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.

Some of the online combatants have shifted away from tactics used earlier in the conflict. In the first phase of the war, Ukrainian hackers focused on attacks intended to knock Russian websites offline.

Russian hackers targeted Ukrainian government websites in January, ahead of the invasion, installing “wiper” malware that permanently clears data from computer networks. More recently, Russian hackers appear to have mounted attacks that could have turned off electricity or shut down military communications. (Several of those efforts were foiled, American officials say.)

But the disclosure of personal data is more akin to information warfare than cyberwarfare. It has echoes of Russia’s tactics in 2016, when hackers backed by a Russian intelligence agency stole and leaked data from the Democratic National Committee and from individuals working on Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. Such hacks are intended to embarrass and to influence political outcomes, rather than to destroy equipment or infrastructure.

Experts have warned that the involvement of amateur hackers in the conflict in Ukraine could lead to confusion and incite more state-backed hacking, as governments seek to defend themselves and strike back against their attackers.

“Some cybercrime groups have recently publicly pledged support for the Russian government,” the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency [warned in an advisory](#) on Wednesday. “These Russian-aligned cybercrime groups have threatened to conduct cyberoperations in retaliation for perceived cyberoffensives against the Russian government or the Russian people.”

Distributed Denial of Secrets, or DDoSecrets, the nonprofit organization publishing many of the leaked materials, was founded in 2018 and has published material from U.S. law enforcement agencies, shell companies and right-wing groups. But since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the group has been flooded with data from Russian government agencies and companies. It currently hosts more than 40 data sets related to Russian entities.

“There has been a lot more activity on that front since the start of the war,” said Lorax B. Horne, a member of DDoSecrets. “Since the end of February, it hasn’t been all Russian data sets, but it has been an overwhelming amount of data that we’ve been receiving.”

DDoSecrets operates as a clearinghouse, publishing data it receives from sources through an open submission process. The organization says that its mission is transparency with the public and that it

avoids political affiliations. It is often described as a successor to WikiLeaks, another nonprofit group that has published leaked data it received from anonymous sources.

On March 1, the Ukrainian news outlet Ukrainska Pravda published names and personal information that it said belonged to 120,000 Russian troops fighting in Ukraine. The information came from the Center for Defense Strategies, a Ukrainian security think tank, the news outlet reported. In late March, Ukraine's military intelligence service leaked the names and personal data of 620 people it said were officers with Russia's F.S.B.

And in early April, the military intelligence service published the personal information of Russian soldiers it claimed were responsible for war crimes in Bucha, a suburb where investigators say Russian troops waged a campaign of terror against civilians.

"All war criminals will be brought to justice for crimes committed against the civilian population of Ukraine," the military intelligence service said in a statement on its website that accompanied the Bucha data dump. (Russia has denied responsibility for the Bucha killings.)

Russian state-backed hackers have also carried out a number of cyberattacks in Ukraine since the war began, targeting government agencies, communications infrastructure and utility companies. They have largely relied on destructive malware to erase data and disrupt the operations of critical infrastructure companies, but they have occasionally used hack-and-leak tactics.

In late February, a group calling itself Free Civilian began to leak personal information that supposedly belonged to millions of Ukrainian civilians. Although the group posed as a collective of "hacktivists," or people using their cyberskills to further their political ends, it actually operated as a front for Russian state-backed hackers, according to researchers at CrowdStrike. The hack-and-leak operation was intended to sow distrust in Ukraine's government and its ability to secure citizens' data, the researchers said.

Hackers affiliated with Russia and Belarus have also targeted news media companies and Ukrainian military officials in an effort to spread [disinformation about a surrender](#) by Ukraine's military.

But much of Russia's hacking efforts have focused on damaging critical infrastructure. Last week, Ukrainian officials said they had interrupted a Russian cyberattack on Ukraine's power grid that could have knocked out power to two million people. The G.R.U., Russia's military intelligence unit, was responsible for the attack, Ukraine's security and intelligence service said.

U.S. officials have repeatedly warned American companies that Russia could carry out similar attacks against them and have urged them to harden their cyberdefenses. The governments of Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand have issued similar warnings.

In early April, the Justice Department and the F.B.I. announced that they had acted in secret to [pre-empt a Russian cyberattack](#) by removing malware from computer networks around the world. The move was part of an effort by the Biden administration to put pressure on Russia and discourage it from launching cyberattacks in the United States. Last month, the Justice Department [charged four Russian officials](#) with carrying out a series of cyberattacks against critical infrastructure in the United States.

But so far, the Russian activity directed at the West has been relatively modest, as Chris Inglis, the national cyber director for the Biden administration, acknowledged on Wednesday at an event hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations.

"It's the question of the moment — why, given that we had expectations that the Russian playbook, having relied so heavily on disinformation, cyber, married with all other instruments of power, why haven't we seen a very significant play of cyber, at least against NATO and the United States, in this instance?" he asked.

	He speculated that the Russians thought they were headed to quick victory in February, and when the war effort ran into obstacles, “they were distracted,” he said. “They were busy.”
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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 UK man jailed; commit violent jihad rhetoric</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/man-jailed-after-worshippers-reported-his-call-to-commit-violent-jihad/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/man-jailed-after-worshippers-reported-his-call-to-commit-violent-jihad/</a>
GIST	<p>A man who gave an uninvited speech at a mosque, in which he encouraged worshippers to commit violent jihad, has been jailed.</p> <p>Abu Bakr Deghayes of Saltdean in Brighton, U.K. was found guilty of encouraging terrorism, under Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006 following a trial at the Old Bailey Central Criminal Court on 19 January. On April 21 he was sentenced to four years imprisonment with one year on license, a five year total sentence.</p> <p>The 53-year-old was arrested and charged after making an unwanted speech, the contents of which encouraged terrorism, at a mosque in Brighton on November 1, 2020. In the speech he stated that committing Jihad was an obligation and he encouraged Jihad by the sword.</p> <p>At sentencing, Detective Chief Superintendent Oliver Wright, Head of Counter Terrorism Policing South East (CTPSE), said: “Deghayes used a toxic rhetoric that could radicalize others, but his destructive views were rejected by the community he was preaching to. In the speech he made, he was at risk of persuading others to take action and follow his extremist view of the world but, due to the diligence and awareness of the people it was directed at, his actions were reported, and he was subsequently convicted of this serious crime.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 ISIS supporters urged to ‘roll up sleeves’</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/featured/with-new-leader-isis-supporters-urged-to-roll-up-your-sleeves-and-start-plucking-heads/">https://www.hstoday.us/featured/with-new-leader-isis-supporters-urged-to-roll-up-your-sleeves-and-start-plucking-heads/</a>
GIST	<p>Painting coalition targeting of ISIS leaders as ultimately inconsequential for the terror group’s survival or success, a new magazine published by ISIS supporters in India encouraged jihadists around the globe to “roll up your sleeves” and commence “plucking heads” while pledging loyalty to the latest head of ISIS.</p> <p>Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi “was the best successor to the most excellent predecessor” and “assumed the leadership at an unenviable time... and reminding of the days of az-Zarqawi, he reignited the war on them with such ferocity,” the 26th monthly issue of the English-language Voice of Hind magazine stated, noting the ISIS prison break in Syria in January. “It was a battle in the backyard of the atheists, and it revealed their lack of capability and the weakness of their structure, which was founded on the edge of a crumbling cliff that will ultimately collapse and take them with it, by the willing of Allah.”</p> <p>Qurashi was killed in Syria shortly after the Ghweiran prison break, detonating an explosive as U.S. Special Forces raided the home where he was staying. The Voice of Hind claimed that Qurashi was “assaulting the enemies ... and fighting them head-on” at the time of his death. Later in the issue, the magazine says he “did not let the crusader US army lay even a finger on himself,” and lauded Qurashi’s “extraordinary vision” for encouraging the terror group’s spread to new regions and fighting on “the battlefield or on social media.”</p> <p>The issue also lauded late ISIS spokesman Abu Hamza al-Qurashi, whose death was confirmed by the terror group in March, saying his “words worked like magic” as “he encouraged the believers to take on</p>



the Kuffar [disbelievers] not only with guns and bombs but with knives and IEDs.” The spokesman “actively took on the dirty Jews, the worst enemies of Islam, and gave courage to the Muslims to kill every Jew,” ISIS added.

The magazine urged jihadists to “not delay or hesitate to give bay’ah,” or a loyalty pledge, to new ISIS leader Abu al-Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, with their own announcement vowing “to hear and obey, in activism and compulsion, in hardship and ease” and stating that they “won’t dispute the leaders upon the leadership unless we see clear disbelief in which we have evidence from Allah.”

“Be prepared and roll up your sleeves to diligently work in earnest, for the war has revealed its fangs and its flames are reaching higher, and its reins have been taken up by a vigorous imam and courageous knight,” the magazine added. “...Get closer to Allah by plucking the heads of the enemies and destroying their souls.”

The group declared that the killing of ISIS leaders “will not affect the state” because it has “spread to the Jungles of Africa and the mountains of Khurasan” and the jihadists expect “they will kill and be killed.” Fighting will continue “until the crusaders are slaughtered in Dabiq” and mujahideen “establish the prayer in Rome, as conquerors.”

Dabiq was symbolically the name of the first magazine published by ISIS in Iraq and Syria, with the last issue published in 2016. And in the early days of the terror group, ISIS published a series of e-books detailing their goals, including the “Black Flags from Rome” volume that vowed to conquer the city by 2020. That e-book detailed the terror group’s strategy to sack the Vatican and predicted mob bosses would put up tough resistance: “There is no doubt that if Muslims want to take over Italy, the Islamic State European fighters will have to ally with other militias to fight the Mafia before the conquest of Rome.” It recommended starting the fight in Bologna to choke off supply routes to the south.

A subsequent article in the Voice of Hind issue bylined “from brothers in Pakistan” continues to argue that their success won’t be based on the killing or capture of ISIS leaders and stresses that they “should not start worshipping their leaders because of their sincerity and piety, their achievements and efforts,” because “nothing has harmed Islam as much as personalityism.”

“Global tyrannical think tanks have lost their senses and gone insane about what else they can do to intimidate and defeat these monotheistic servants of Allah,” the article continued, asserting that the quick pledges of allegiance to the new ISIS leader “caused great fear” and “exposed the restlessness and anxiety of apostates.”

“The Jihad and fighting is in full swing against the Crusaders, Jews, Christians, Hindus, other infidels and polytheists around the world,” ISIS said, noting the “recent glorious attack” in Israel that “gave surge to the wave in grounds of war.”

If supporters are unable to join jihadists in provinces where the terror group is active, “then pick up your arms to attack Kuffar,” the article continues. “And if you lack weapons, then pick up kitchen knives, daggers and home-based poisons, they should be sufficient for you.”

And an article bylined “from brothers in Maldives” argued that continued targeting of ISIS leaders “shows the significant effect the existence of a Khilafah system has over the wretched nations of Kufr” as “they hope that continuing this trend would lead to an ‘organizational collapse’ of the Islamic State and halt or disrupt the operational capabilities of Mujahideen making it harder for them to continue their attacks.”

“Islamic State has a well-managed leadership structure and succession protocols,” the article added, declaring “the blood of its leaders only strengthens the resolve of its soldiers... unlike other militia groups who unpredictably change their goals or give up on their religion with the demise of their leaders.”

“If the leaders of the Kuffar do not die from the weapons of the Mujahideen, they are more likely to die from the envy they have for the leaders of the Islamic State,” the group said.

	They also issued a “stern warning against those who have wronged themselves in delaying the Bay’ah” to repent, adding that ISIS “is determined to take retribution on account of every leader and scholar that has been killed among them.”
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 FBI director: rising violence, extremism</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-director-christopher-wray-domestic-terrorism-violence-in-america/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fbi-director-christopher-wray-domestic-terrorism-violence-in-america/</a>
GIST	<p>In 2020, there was a 29% jump in murder in the United States, nearly 5,000 more people killed than the year before. FBI Director Christopher Wray pointed to the pandemic, repeat offenders, and more juveniles committing violent crime as some reasons for the increase in an <a href="#">interview with 60 Minutes this week</a>.</p> <p>"And we're seeing an alarming frequency of some of the worst of the worst getting back out on the streets," Wray told correspondent Scott Pelley. "We are working very hard with our partners, state and local law enforcement partners, through task forces, task forces all over the country. And through surging rapid deployment teams to try to combat violent crime in specific hot spots. Last year I think we arrested something like 15,000 violent gang members around the country. And part of what fuels us to pursue this mission is our deep conviction that law enforcement's most sacred duty is to ensure that people can live free from fear in their own homes and neighborhood's."</p> <p>"But Mr. Director, some people are in their homes living in fear of the police coming through the door with a no-knock warrant," Pelley responded, "And I wonder how the FBI can contribute to the reduction of police brutality, which also occurs in our country?"</p> <p>"Well, we take very seriously our responsibility to both protect the American people and uphold the Constitution," Wray said. "And that includes where it happens, going after police misconduct if it violates federal criminal law."</p> <p>Wray, who has served as FBI Director since 2017, said violence against police officers is increasing too.</p> <p>"Violence against law enforcement in this country is one of the biggest phenomena that I think doesn't get enough attention," Wray said. "Last year, officers were being killed at a rate of almost one every five days."</p> <p>In 2021, 73 officers were killed, a 59% increase in the murders of police officers. Wray said some were targeted solely because they were police officers.</p> <p>"Some of it is tied to the violent crime problem as a whole. But one of the phenomena that we saw in the last year is that an alarming percentage of the 73 law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty last year were killed through things like being ambushed-- or shot while out on patrol," Wray told Pelley. "Wearing the badge shouldn't make you a target."</p> <p>Pelley also asked Wray about the Bureau's response to the attack on the Capitol. The FBI has been criticized for failing to develop intelligence that might have predicted the assault.</p> <p>"Over 800 people have now been charged. Agents in field offices all over the United States engaged in it. And we take this incredibly seriously," Wray told Pelley.</p> <p>"The criticism of the FBI after January 6th was that the plans of these people were on social media and the FBI didn't see that," Pelley said.</p> <p>"We at the FBI shared information through a variety of intelligence products for a solid year leading up to January 6th that raised the potential for violent extremism," Wray said. "What we did not, to my knowledge, have was intelligence indicating that thousands of people were going to physically storm the U.S. Capitol in the middle of the constitutional process."</p>

	<p>"You can bet we have been taking a hard look at how we can be even more preemptive, even more aggressive, even more responsive to make sure that we prevent something like that from ever happening again," Wray continued. "And you can be sure, Americans can be sure, the FBI is fiercely determined to do our part with the other agencies to make sure that that never happens again."</p> <p>"One of the things you learned was that these militia groups can organize and mobilize," Pelley said.</p> <p>"And that's part of a broader phenomenon that we've seen over the last couple of years, of a variety of anti-government, anti-authority violent extremists," Wray said. "But a lot of the domestic terrorist threat that we face is not from well-organized, structured, traditional groups. In many ways, the hardest, biggest threat, terrorist threat that Americans face here in the homeland, is from what are essentially lone actors or people conspiring with one or two other people and using crude attack methods, a gun, a knife, a car So, if you think about the expression that a lot of Americans have heard about connecting the dots, for the kind of attack I'm describing, there are not a lotta dots to connect."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Militants in Afghanistan strike Pakistan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-islamic-state-group-business-pakistan-united-nations-816446e813c7208c4fb196fa20d0de34">https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-islamic-state-group-business-pakistan-united-nations-816446e813c7208c4fb196fa20d0de34</a>
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD (AP) — Militants in Afghanistan fired heavy weapons across the border into a Pakistani military outpost overnight, killing three personnel, the army said Saturday, in the latest violence to rattle the volatile region.</p> <p>A firefight ensued with the militants firing toward the army post in Pakistan's rugged North Waziristan region, and several were killed, the statement said. There was no immediate way to independently confirm details of the attack.</p> <p>It comes as Afghanistan is reeling from a series of explosions in recent days, including the bombing of a mosque in northern Kunduz province on Friday <a href="#">that killed 33 people, including several students of an adjacent religious school or madrassa</a>.</p> <p>That includes an attack Thursday on the Abdul Rahim Shaheed school in Kabul that killed seven children. It re-opened on Saturday, with children remembering their fallen classmates with roses.</p> <p>The striking increase in attacks in Afghanistan — as well as in neighboring Pakistan — highlights the growing security challenge facing Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, who swept to power last August in the closing days of the chaotic withdrawal of American and NATO troops ending their 20-year war.</p> <p>Even as their harsh religiously motivated edicts, which seemed reminiscent of their late 1990s rule, drew harsh criticism, their seemingly heavy-handed approach to security brought early expectations of improved safety.</p> <p>However a vicious Islamic State affiliate known as the Islamic State in Khorasn Province, or IS-K — which claimed the recent spate of attacks in Afghanistan as well as a growing number in neighboring Pakistan — is proving an intractable challenge.</p> <p>IS-K took responsibility for a series of attacks across Afghanistan on Thursday, most of which targeted the country's minority Shiites who the radical Sunni Muslim group revile as heretics.</p> <p>Still, the IS-K, which is an enemy of Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, is not the only militant organization in Afghanistan contributing to the security dilemma facing Kabul's religiously driven government.</p> <p>The violent Pakistani Taliban, known as the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan or (TTP) — which the United Nations says numbers around 10,000 in Afghanistan — has stepped up its assault on Pakistan's military</p>

outposts from its Afghan hideouts. Even the upstart IS-K has taken responsibility for some of the attacks targeting Pakistani military personnel, damaging relations between the two countries.

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have promised no militant group would use its soil as a base to attack another country, but Kabul has yet to arrest or hand over any TTP leaders in Afghanistan to Pakistan. Other militant groups also operating in Afghanistan include China's militant Uighurs of East Turkistan Movement, which seeks independence for northwest China, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

Some of the groups are loosely allied to the IS-K, while others act more independently, but on Saturday Pakistan's military statement warned Afghanistan's Taliban rulers to do more.

"Pakistan strongly condemns the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for activities against Pakistan and expects that the Afghan Government will not allow conduct of such activities, in future," said the Pakistan military statement.

After seven of its troops were killed in an ambush earlier this month, Pakistan on April 16 retaliated with bombing raids inside Afghanistan that locals in Afghanistan's eastern Khost province said killed dozens of refugees. The United Nations Education Fund (UNICEF) confirmed 20 children were killed in the strikes in Afghanistan's border provinces of Khost and Kunar.

At the Abdul Rahim Shaheed School, which was among the IS-K targets in the Thursday attacks, school principal Ghulam Haider Husseini handed roses to each student as they arrived.

He also gave students a pen saying "it is our pen who will bring about a change in this situation."

Separately, the Taliban on Saturday closed the lucrative Islam Qala border crossing with Iran after the two countries squabbled over a road Afghanistan's Taliban rulers planned to build in the area, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Iran media said the dispute was handed over to the Iranian and Afghan interior ministries to sort out.

Iran and Afghanistan share three border crossings along their more than 900 -kilometer (560-mile) border.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Iran concern: ISIS tests Afghan red line</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.newsweek.com/irans-worst-fears-afghanistan-are-coming-true-isis-tests-red-line-1699753">https://www.newsweek.com/irans-worst-fears-afghanistan-are-coming-true-isis-tests-red-line-1699753</a>
GIST	<p>With the United States' foreign policy focus set firmly on the war in Ukraine, the distant unrest left behind in Afghanistan has become a primary concern for Iran, as attacks against Shiite Muslims in the neighboring nation threaten to ignite sectarian tensions across the region.</p> <p>An attack claimed Thursday by the Islamic State militant group's Khorasan outfit (ISIS-K) killed dozens of people at the Seh Dokan mosque in Mazar-e-Sharif. It marks the latest in a series of deadly acts targeting Afghanistan's Shiite Muslim religious minority, comprised mainly of ethnic Hazara, one of the largest ethnic groups in a country in which no single ethnic community forms a majority.</p> <p>Just one day before the blast, another deadly explosion rocked the Abdul Rahim Shahid high school located in a primarily Shiite Hazara neighborhood in Kabul. Schoolchildren were among the dead.</p> <p>While the unrest plaguing majority-Sunni Muslim Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover last August has not targeted only Shiite Muslims, the attacks have had an outsized impact on the community, which had long faced discrimination and repression, even under the Washington-backed government that collapsed after the U.S. military withdrawal.</p> <p>The attacks have also received special attention from Iran, home to the largest Shiite Muslim population in the world.</p>

"Iran is deeply concerned about the sharp rise in the number of such terrorist activities in Afghanistan," the Iranian permanent mission to the United Nations told Newsweek in a statement. "Unfortunately, some extremist forces are embarking on racial and ethnic disparities in Afghanistan for their own narrow political objectives."

The mission said Tehran would continue to work toward fostering good ties with Taliban-led Kabul, but called on the Islamic Emirate to hold accountable those responsible for recent attacks.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran calls on the ruling establishment in Afghanistan to urgently identify and punish the perpetrators of these heinous crimes," the mission said. "As in the past, the Islamic Republic of Iran is utilizing all its potentials to establish best relations with Afghanistan and views peace and security in this neighboring country as imperative."

Such recent attacks evoke a difficult history between the two nations, especially in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif, where militants massacred up to 11 people, mostly Iranian diplomats at the city's consulate in 1998, under the first period of Taliban rule that lasted from 1994 to the U.S.-led intervention in 2001. The consulate, which remains open today, released a statement Thursday that "strongly condemned" the blast at the city's mosque earlier that same day.

A number of top officials, including Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, have also weighed in on the recent spate of attacks, as did Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh, who described the "terrorist acts" as "repulsive," and noted they occurred as large crowds of worshippers gathered during the holy month of Ramadan.

The impact is felt most readily in Afghanistan, however, where the Taliban continues to struggle to assert control amid a lingering humanitarian crisis exacerbated by a lack of steady foreign aid.

"The last two days have been really painful for Afghans," Alhanafi Wardak, a prominent Taliban member, told Newsweek. "I must first say that these attacks were on the entire Afghan nation, here the pain and sorrow of all Afghans is shared. The Islamic Emirate is committed to preventing similar incidents and punishing the perpetrators."

But Wardak saw other actors behind the effort to stir unrest among communities in Afghanistan, saying that "the regional intelligence community, which also threatens our neighboring countries, is trying to use various means to create security concerns in Afghanistan, especially for the minorities, especially the Shiites."

"The fact is that this is not just an attack on Shiites, it is an attack on all Afghans," Wardak said. "As you know, our security forces were the target of a similar terrorist attack today. So our enemy is common."

As the deadly blast in Mazar-e-Sharif garnered international attention, ISIS claimed a separate attack that Taliban authorities said killed at least 11 more people in Kunduz, another northern Afghan city.

"Throughout Afghanistan, the Islamic Emirate's security and intelligence forces have been able to thwart similar terrorist groups," Wardak said, "and we will soon bring the perpetrators of such attacks to justice."

Shortly after, Wardak stated that Abdul Hamid Sangriar, "a key member of ISIS and former governor of Balkh province," had been arrested during a "special operation" in the Charbolak district of Balkh province, in which Mazar-e-Sharif is located.

As for Iran, Wardak said that the Taliban was prepared to coordinate with other nations in curbing the activities of militant groups "at the regional level," where "we are ready to work with our neighbors, not just Iran, to fulfill our responsibility to prevent the activities of terrorist groups."

But when it came to domestic affairs, he asserted that "the internal security of the country is our internal issue and the responsibility of our security forces."

"I assure you that similar incidents will be prevented soon," Wardak added. "The security situation in our country is better and more secure than in some of our neighbors."

Militant groups bearing jihadi and separatist ideologies have long exploited Afghanistan's instability to conduct cross-border activities. The issue has presented a common problem for a country located at the heart of Asia and borders China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

These countries, along with Russia, have gathered representatives to discuss the issue on several occasions, most recently earlier this month in the Chinese city of Tunxi. And while all sides have emphasized a need to crack down on rogue entities in Afghanistan, at least one, the country with the closest ties to the Taliban, has taken matters into its own hands.

Pakistan conducted a rare series of airstrikes said to target the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TPP), a separate group from the Afghan Taliban. While the Taliban currently leading the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have long enjoyed good ties with Islamabad, the TPP have conducted a decades-long insurgency in Pakistan, where the group is considered a terrorist organization.

Events in Afghanistan bear the risk of having internal reverberations in Iran as well, and vice versa. While Iran has hosted up to one million Afghan refugees, second perhaps only to Pakistan, reports have persisted over the years of discrimination in their host nation, and frictions have emerged between the populations of the two countries after a series of high-profile incidents this month.

A rare stabbing attack at the Imam Reza holy shrine in Iran's Mashhad was reported to have killed two people earlier this month, and while no direct connection between the foreign attacker and Afghanistan was established, Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi took an opportunity after the attack to assuage rising tempers, saying "the enemy tries to take advantage of the ethnic and religious differences between friendly nations, but it will fail to achieve its objective."

He referred at the time to Iran and Afghanistan as "a united nation with common civilizational roots and backgrounds."

But the incident occurred amid a flurry of videos that emerged across social media showing the purported mistreatment of Afghan refugees by Iranians, including physical abuse and armed threats. Such footage garnered a strong reaction in Afghanistan, where the Taliban was forced to provide security to angry protests in front of the Iranian diplomatic institutions in the country.

With tensions high in both camps, Iran continues to express concerns over insecurity in Afghanistan. Afifeh Abedi, a foreign policy analyst at the Tehran-based Center for Strategic Research told Newsweek that "Iran considers various social, political, bilateral, regional and international dimensions of the terrorist attacks in Afghanistan."

"However, crimes in Afghanistan have hurt Iranian public sentiment, putting pressure on Tehran to take a tough stance against the Taliban," she added. "I think Iran has a pragmatic policy toward the Taliban. These incidents may lead to increase formal cooperation between Tehran and Kabul."

In the interest of safeguarding Shiite Muslim populations against ISIS, often referred to by opponents by its Arabic-language acronym Daesh, Iran has previously adopted an interventionist approach in Iraq and Syria, largely through the use of allied militias, including a largely Afghan Hazara group called the Fatemiyoun.

But Abedi said that the situation in Afghanistan "is more diverse" as "Iran needs to consider more complex considerations" with the Taliban in control there. These include taking "more security measures at the



common borders" and developing "social, political and security relations with the Taliban to ensure the security of Afghanistan."

Echoing the Taliban's Wardak, she said Iran would continue "its regional efforts to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan." But she warned this cooperation would only erode should the attacks on Shiite Muslims continue.

"The killing of Afghan Shiites first and foremost leads to the destruction of the Taliban's position as a government," Abedi said. "As a result, the Taliban must take more responsibility."

Also echoing Wardak, however, Iranian senior military and security analyst Hossein Dalirian said Tehran too saw external interference fueling the recent wave of attacks, specifically naming U.S. and United Kingdom-tied private military groups allegedly "providing financial and intelligence assistance to certain opposition groups in Afghanistan in efforts to prop up these groups and push the country into a sectarian-religious war."

"I do believe that such a war, in the first place, would shed the blood of hundreds of innocent people in Afghanistan," Dalirian told Newsweek, "and in the second place, would buttress Daesh in the country, which could play havoc with the entire region as well as the U.S. and Europe."

One such foreign group named by Dalirian, the U.S.-based ACADEMI private military company, formerly known as Blackwater and now part of the Constellis security conglomerate, was reached by Newsweek for comment.

Despite regional frictions, however, Tehran continues to engage with Kabul and even form new agreements in various fields. In the past months since the Taliban took control of Afghanistan, Dalirian noted that "Iran has made diplomatic efforts to promote and expand security for different religious sects in Afghanistan, particularly the Shias," and "has also consulted Taliban officials to materialize this."

And he too felt Iran would not intervene, though he warned there would be only so much violence and instability Tehran would tolerate.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has no intention to directly or indirectly interfere in other countries' internal affairs," Dalirian said. "But certainly, Afghan Shias' life, as well as security, is its red line, and no one can and should cross this red line."

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Al-Shabab claims Mogadishu bomb blast</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/somalias-al-shabab-islamic-extremist-group-claims-responsibility-for-bomb-blast-that-kills-at-least-6">https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/somalias-al-shabab-islamic-extremist-group-claims-responsibility-for-bomb-blast-that-kills-at-least-6</a>
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Somalia (AP) — A bomb blast by Somalia's Islamic extremist rebels hit a popular seaside restaurant in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, killing at least six people, ambulance service officials say.</p> <p>The explosion was detonated by a suicide bomber who had been denied access inside the restaurant where the Somali Police Commissioner and several lawmakers were having dinner, Somali Police Spokesman Maj. Abdifatah Aden Hassan announced at a press conference Saturday.</p> <p>The explosion occurred Friday evening when many patrons gathered for an Iftar meal to break the Ramadan fast. The restaurant is frequented by government officials.</p> <p>Those killed were mostly civilians and seven other people were wounded, the director of Aamin Ambulance Service, Abdulkadir Adan told The Associated Press by phone. The blast caused "huge damage," he said. Some security personnel were killed in the blast but police did not specify how many.</p> <p>Somalia's al-Shabab Islamic extremist group has claimed responsibility for the explosion.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Mali: coordinated attacks target bases</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/soldiers-die-attacks-targeting-mali-military-bases-84279699">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/soldiers-die-attacks-targeting-mali-military-bases-84279699</a>
GIST	<p>BAMAKO, Mali -- A series of attacks targeted three military bases in Mali on Sunday, killing at least six soldiers and injuring nearly a dozen more, the West African nation's army said.</p> <p>In a tweet, the Malian army said simultaneous attacks were underway in Sevare, Niono and Bapho, three central towns in the sprawling desert nation.</p> <p>While no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State has ravaged the nation for eight years. The military junta that seized power in 2020 has been struggling to stem the violence.</p> <p>Mali's army has been attacked a number of times this year but this is the first time they are being hit in three different cities.</p> <p>A military official not authorized to speak to the media said the attacks involved car bombs and that the camp in Bapho was particularly hard hit, with shrapnel from an explosion damaging a helicopter.</p> <p>The violence occurred in the center of the country where the Malian military together with the Wagner Group, a Russian mercenary force, has been very active and where the junta has been claiming to have been making significant progress, said Michael Shurkin, a former political analyst at the CIA who works with the Dakar-based 14 North Strategies.</p> <p>“The attacks appear to belie the government’s claims. The attacks appear well-coordinated. This is not the work of an adversary whose back is up against a wall,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Nigeria: IS claims attack on police station</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/is-affiliates-claim-bomb-attack-at-bar-in-north-east-nigeria">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/23/is-affiliates-claim-bomb-attack-at-bar-in-north-east-nigeria</a>
GIST	<p>Three policemen have been killed in central Nigeria’s Kogi state after gunmen stormed a police station in an attack claimed by <a href="#">Islamic State</a>.</p> <p>State police spokesperson William Ovyé Aya said a fierce gun battle took place after “hoodlums” entered the station in Adavi town on Saturday.</p> <p>It comes a day after explosives planted at a bar in north-east <a href="#">Nigeria</a> injured 11 people, the second attack in days targeting drinking spots in Taraba state and claimed by the Islamic State West Africa Province (Iswap).</p> <p>“The [police] Command lost three of its officers during the gun duel,” Aya said, adding that the attackers had escaped with gunshot wounds.</p> <p>Efforts are under way “to apprehend and bring them to book”, he said, and residents are urged to report anyone with bullet wounds to the police.</p> <p>Iswap, which took responsibility for the Adavi attack in a Telegram statement, has claimed a higher death toll, saying that five people were killed in the raid. “Soldiers of the caliphate attacked a police station,” it said.</p> <p>Criminal gangs and jihadists have staged repeated attacks in Kogi state. Last September, gunmen broke into a medium security prison in Kabba, freeing more than 200 inmates, including detained colleagues.</p>

On Saturday afternoon, the group also claimed responsibility for a blast at a moonshine bar in Nukkai, outside the state capital, Jalingo, at about 1900 GMT on Friday.

Police spokesperson Usman Abdullahi told AFP that 11 people were injured in the blast, including 10 men and a woman.

“The explosive concealed in a polythene bag was left at the bar by an unknown person during a power outage,” he said.

“The soldiers of the caliphate detonated an explosive device ... inside a bar in Nukkai,” the group said on Telegram, claiming the attack wounded 10 people.

On Tuesday, another explosion at a bar in the nearby town of Iware killed six people and injured 16 others, police said.

Iswap claimed the blast in a statement posted on IS propaganda channels monitored by SITE Intelligence. That was the first indication that Iswap was operating in Taraba, outside its known area of operations in the Lake Chad region.

Taraba is one of several [northern states](#) where criminal gangs and bandits raid villages, kill residents, loot and burn homes and kidnap for ransom.

There have been increasing concerns about [growing ties between jihadists and bandits](#) who are motivated by financial motives with no ideological leaning.

Iswap and its rival Boko Haram are known to step up attacks during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

On Wednesday, Iswap killed 11 people, including nine at a bar in north-east Nigeria’s Yobe state.

A 13-year Islamist insurgency has killed 40,000 people and displaced 2 million in north-eastern Nigeria, according to the United Nations.

Elsewhere, an explosion at an illegal oil refining depot in Nigeria’s Rivers state killed more than 100 people overnight, a local government official and the NGO Youths and Environmental Advocacy Centre (YEAC) said on Saturday.

“The fire outbreak occurred at an illegal bunkering site and it affected over 100 people who were burnt beyond recognition,” the state commissioner for petroleum resources, Goodluck Opiah, said.

Unemployment and poverty in the Niger Delta have made illegal crude refining an attractive business but with deadly consequences. Crude oil is tapped from a maze of pipelines owned by large oil companies and refined into products in makeshift tanks.

The hazardous process has led to many fatal accidents and has polluted a region already blighted by oil spills in farmland, creeks and lagoons.

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	04/22 New Jersey allows cops to smoke cannabis
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.fox5ny.com/news/nj-legal-cannabis-off-duty-police-officers">https://www.fox5ny.com/news/nj-legal-cannabis-off-duty-police-officers</a>
GIST	JERSEY CITY, N.J. - Anyone 21 and older can now <a href="#">legally buy weed in New Jersey</a> . And, at least according to the law as written, that includes police officers. But <a href="#">Jersey City</a> Mayor Steven Fulop said he plans to fire any cop in his city who tests positive for marijuana at any time.

"If somebody wants to test us as a city and an administration, they're more than welcome, but they certainly know where we stand and they can expect long litigation over it," Fulop said. "Every other state in the country that legalized cannabis had a carve-out that did not allow off-duty police officers to smoke."

But New Jersey's [cannabis](#) legalization law contains no such carve-out, as indicated in a memo the state's attorney general sent last week to law enforcement executives in which he stressed the state forbids any employer — including a police department — from punishing its employees for using recreational pot so long as they remain sober at work.

"If it's [litigated](#), it's litigated," Fulop said.

"It sounds like Mayor Fulop's got some unique circumstances in Jersey City, in terms of the way firearms are purchased and potential federal challenges," [Gov. Phil Murphy](#) said.

Fulop believes Jersey City's circumstances aren't unique and the state's law clashes with federal laws requiring every cop in the Garden State sign something when they receive their firearm promising not to use any federally prohibited drug — including marijuana.

"Allowing police officers to conflict with that would open the city up for litigation," Fulop said.

The governor said he is open to legislation "tweaking" the law that would allow local law enforcement departments to set their own policy.

Already a state senator has promised to introduce a bill banning off-duty cops from getting high but the Senate president — the lead sponsor for legalization — called that proposed change "a slippery slope."

"Newark followed us, Weehawken followed us, Bayonne followed us," Fulop said.

The New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association, which represents cops in all of those aforementioned departments but not Jersey City's, told FOX 5 NY that it would defer to the state's chief law enforcement officer.

In a statement to FOX 5 NY, Acting Attorney General Matthew Platkin said he shares concerns about how marijuana legalization may impact the role of the police.

"New Jersey's law legalizing and regulating cannabis is clear and we are obligated to comply. I welcome conversations on how best to protect public safety," Platkin said. "Any efforts by local governments to subject officers to additional requirements in the interim, however, may present employment law issues that we anticipate will be handled between those governments and officers in the appropriate course."

Police officers routinely submit to blood work after getting in an accident or firing their guns. Fulop argues that the inability to measure an individual's highness in any given moment — like we can blood-alcohol level — creates a lack of clarity that would compromise public trust were a cop were to test positive for marijuana.

"You can't tell if somebody smoked on the job, an hour before they started the job, eight hours before or a week before," Fulop said.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 All U-Haul trucks have AZ license plates</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/23/business/uhaul-rental-trucks-license-plates-arizona/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/23/business/uhaul-rental-trucks-license-plates-arizona/index.html</a>
GIST	<b>New YorkCNN Business</b> — There are around 175,000 white and orange U-Haul rental trucks in the United States and Canada for do-it-yourself movers. And they all have something strange in common: Arizona license plates with the word “apportioned” slapped on them.

The reason?

An esoteric agreement between the 48 continental US states, Washington DC and all 10 Canadian provinces determining how big-rigs and other commercial vehicles that travel across state lines divvy up billions of dollars of license plate registration fees.

The issue of U-Haul's license plates took on greater significance last week, after investigators in New York City said they were [looking for information about a U-Haul van](#) with Arizona plates in connection with a subway shooting that left more than 20 people injured.

### **License plate fees**

When you register your passenger car, you usually pay a small license plate fee to your state DMV that goes to funding roads, bridges and other public infrastructure projects.

But commercial trucking, rental and leasing companies that use big rigs to transport goods through multiple states operate under a [completely different system](#). These vehicles need special permission to travel across state lines and have to pay higher license fees, often upwards of \$1,000 a year.

Such vehicles — known as “apportionable vehicles” — are registered and licensed under what’s known as the International Registration Plan (IRP), an agreement created between states in the 1970s.

The IRP allows commercial trucks traveling within the United States and Canada to use one state-issued license plate and registration card but requires operators to pay fees to other states based on how many miles they drive in them and their weight. Some companies keep track of miles manually while others use GPS systems.

So U-Haul, which has been based in Phoenix since 1967, registers all of its rental trucks in Arizona and the state then distributes those license plate fees to other states where the rental trucks travel.

Say, for example, one U-Haul van drove 20,000 miles in a year. If half of the miles were in Utah and the other half were in Colorado, the fees would be split among those two states.

U-Haul, owned by the holding company Amerco ([UHAL](#)), does not disclose how much it pays in registration fees annually or which states receive the most cash. But a spokesperson for U-Haul said it paid “a vast sum of money” in IRP fees.

### **No free riders**

Although most travelers have never heard of the IRP, it was developed as the interstate travel system expanded.

The agreement eliminated the hassle of trucks having to carrying separate license plates and cab cards for each state they traveled through. It was also designed to ensure that states got a fair share of license plate fees from out-of-state vehicles that were wearing down their roads.

“There are pictures of old trucks with 10 or 12 license plates on the front,” said Tim Adams, the CEO of International Registration Plan, Inc., an organization that oversees compliance with the agreement.

Around 3 million vehicles and 350,000 companies were part of the IRP in 2021, Adams said. They paid \$3.5 billion in fees that were used to fund highway projects and safety initiatives.

“It generates a lot of money for the road funds each year,” he said. The IRP is a “fluid agreement that still has purpose.”

In fact, the agreement has worked so effectively that the International Fuel Tax Agreement (IFTA), a similar arrangement between states divvying up commercial vehicles’ fuel tax sales, was modeled after it.

	So the next time you're playing the license plate game during a road trip and keep passing U-Haul vans with Arizona plates, you can impress your family by explaining why.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Rescue: woman falls headfirst in vault toilet</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/us/woman-rescue-toilet-washington-trnd/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/us/woman-rescue-toilet-washington-trnd/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>If you think hiking stinks, get a load of this ...</p> <p>A woman was rescued by two fire crews after she fell headfirst into a vault toilet while trying to retrieve her cellphone at a park on Olympic Peninsula, Washington.</p> <p>The woman in her mid-40s was using an outhouse at Mount Walker, a popular destination for hikers, on April 19, when the accident occurred, according to the <a href="#">Brinnon Fire Department</a>.</p> <p>A vault toilet is a waterless, non-flush toilet usually placed at outdoor locations like campgrounds – so named because the toilets store waste in an airtight vault underground.</p> <p>After dropping her phone in the toilet, the woman disassembled the seat and housing of the toilet in an attempt to reach it, the fire department said on Facebook. She used a dog leash to try to “fish it out,” before using it to support herself as she tried to grab the phone.</p> <p>But the attempt failed, and she slid into the toilet. Fortunately, after 20 minutes inside the vault, she was able to find and use her phone to call 911.</p> <p>Crews from the Brinnon Fire Department and Quilcene Fire Rescue reported to the scene and pulled her to safety.</p> <p>According to the fire department, the uninjured woman was washed down and given a Tyvek suit to wear. But she declined any further medical treatment and continued on her way.</p> <p>“The patient was extremely fortunate not to be overcome by toxic gases or sustain injury,” the department said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Arizona's dry future begins</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/arizonas-dry-future-begins-as-colorado-river-shrinks-11650718801?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/arizonas-dry-future-begins-as-colorado-river-shrinks-11650718801?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>PHOENIX—Arizona is the first state to experience deep cutbacks caused by a drought-fueled decline in the Colorado River, one of the most important sources of water in the American Southwest.</p> <p>Farmers in the fast-growing state are losing most of the water they receive from the Colorado this year, and many are leaving large amounts of land unplanted, with further cuts planned for next year. If shrinking water flows in the river don't reverse, cities in Arizona and other states could be affected next, officials say.</p> <p>“All of the projections are for the flow to continue to go down because of the warming of the climate,” said Tom Buschatzke, director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources. “The challenge will be how you parse out those limited resources from a long-term perspective.”</p> <p>The 1,450-mile Colorado River supplies drinking water to 40 million people and irrigates 5.5 million acres of agricultural land. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation last year declared the first-ever shortage on the Colorado after the level of Nevada's Lake Mead—the river's largest reservoir—was projected to fall</p>



below 1,075 feet. As of Thursday, the reservoir stood at 1,057 feet. In 2000, it was 1,214 feet. Lake Mead is considered full at 1,229 feet.

The so-called Tier 1 shortage triggered a cut of 512,000 acre-feet, or 18% in Arizona's share of Colorado River water—about a quarter of what metropolitan Phoenix uses annually. The cuts are determined under agreements between the U.S. government and seven states that use the river, along with Mexico.

The cuts are being implemented this year, primarily in Arizona's agriculture industry, which annually generates an estimated \$23 billion in economic impact and is a large producer of cotton, lettuce and cattle. Pinal County, an area south of Phoenix which draws the most from the Colorado River in the state, is losing about 75% of that water in 2022 and all of it next year, according to the Arizona Farm Bureau.

"It is a huge cutback to one of the most essential resources Arizona needs, and it is a cutback with no soft place to land," said farm bureau spokeswoman Chelsea McGuire. She said about half the farmland in Pinal County will be left unplanted this year. Wider cutbacks are expected across the state if the drought continues. Arizona farmers plan to ramp up their conservation efforts even more, and plant more drought resistant crops.

Dan Thelander, who cultivates 6,000 acres of crops on his family farm in Pinal County including alfalfa, corn and wheat, said he is leaving 3,200 acres unplanted this year because of the water cuts. To compensate, the farm plans to trim equipment purchases and may lay off about half of its 14-person staff. "I feel like we have all the rest of the problems every farmer does, and on top of that we have dramatic water cuts," said Mr. Thelander.

The West has been afflicted by a record drought for most of the past two decades, attributed in large part to the warming climate, according to researchers.

If Lake Mead falls below 1,050 feet—which officials said was likely to happen in the next few years—it would trigger a Tier 2 shortage in which Arizona's overall cutback will increase to 21% from 18% and cities will be significantly affected. Nevada and Mexico's allocations from the Colorado River, which are already starting to be trimmed, also will fall further.

A Tier 3 shortage, if Lake Mead falls below 1,025 feet, would trigger more cuts in those states and a 7% cut would be imposed in California, where farmers have already lost water from a system tied to the state's northern mountains.

Arizona's urban centers are already preparing for future cutbacks and say they think they can absorb continued population growth. Arizona grew to 7.2 million people in 2020 from 5.1 million in 2000, according to the Census Bureau, and Phoenix was the fastest-growing big city in the country over the past decade.

Scottsdale, Phoenix and other cities have diversified their water sources beyond the Colorado River, and each has been resupplying groundwater reserves. Scottsdale has added three years' worth of water to roughly 15 years' supply already underground. Phoenix has added two years' worth on top of an existing supply that would last about 13 years, according to city officials.

"We've been planning for many, many years for this type of eventuality," said Cynthia Campbell, Phoenix water-resources management adviser. She said residents have also increased conservation. Currently 10% of yards have lawns, compared with 70% in the 1970s.

Scottsdale is filtering wastewater to drinking quality and putting some of it back into the ground for storage. It is also watering golf courses—one of the city's economic engines that fuels tourism—with reclaimed water.

Rio Verde Foothills, an unincorporated community of roughly 2,000 homes north of Scottsdale, has long relied on water hauled in from Scottsdale by trucking companies.

	<p>But following recent Colorado River cutbacks, Scottsdale officials said they would stop shipping water to nonresidents next year. The plan for what comes next has torn the community apart.</p> <p>Some Rio Verde Foothills residents are urging the formation of a local governmental board that could secure water rights. They say having a community-run board would ensure lower prices and a stable water supply. Others in the community who have wells don't want a government entity and are urging neighbors to instead work with a private water company. They say they prepared for the current situation by digging wells on their property, and some said they moved to an unincorporated area specifically to avoid dealing with local government.</p> <p>"We have this group of people ...that want to change everything up here for those of us who were smart and invested and did what we needed to live in the desert," said Christy Jackman, who has two wells.</p> <p>Thomas Galvin, a Maricopa County supervisor, said the board would provide a plan in the coming months. Rio Verde Foothills residents Linda and Mark Vinson think formation of a water district is their best bet. Still, they are nervous about what could happen if the water stops flowing.</p> <p>The couple already designed their house to conserve water hauled from Scottsdale—it has a clothes washer that uses a fraction of the water as normal machines. Now, they say they are talking about what they would do if water deliveries stopped entirely, including installing a composting toilet and showering at the gym.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 South Africa climate crisis alarm</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/south-africa-floods-rain-climate-crisis-extreme-weather">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/apr/24/south-africa-floods-rain-climate-crisis-extreme-weather</a>
GIST	<p>Survivors of South Africa's devastating floods have described "sheet upon sheet of relentless rain" that washed away entire houses, bridges and roads, killing about 450 people and making thousands homeless.</p> <p>The storm, which delivered close to an entire year's usual rainfall in 48 hours, took meteorologists by surprise and has been blamed by experts on climate change. The new disaster comes after three tropical cyclones and two tropical storms hit south-east <a href="#">Africa</a> in just six weeks in the first months of this year.</p> <p>The full extent of the devastation caused by the floods in South Africa this month is yet to become clear, with many victims still missing and authorities still learning of new damage around <a href="#">the eastern coastal city of Durban</a>. Many tens of thousands of people remain without water, and there are rising concerns about an outbreak of infectious disease.</p> <p>Uzair Ismail, 35, said he had been forced to flee his home in central Durban with his wife and eight-year-old when water and mud flooded in through doors, windows and plumbing in the middle of the night when the storm struck almost two weeks ago.</p> <p>"We were lucky to get out alive ... Slowly, slowly we had built ourselves up to a livable home with a few possessions and we had left everything. But others lost much more. We are safe at least," Ismail told the Guardian.</p> <p>Some families were almost entirely wiped out in the disaster, losing eight or 10 members.</p> <p>The South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, described a "catastrophe of enormous proportions" and attributed the disaster to the climate emergency.</p> <p>"It is telling us that climate change is serious, it is here," Ramaphosa said as he visited the flooded metropolitan area of eThekweni, which includes Durban, shortly after the floods. "We no longer can postpone what we need to do, and the measures we need to take to deal with climate change."</p>

Others have echoed Ramaphosa's warning.

"This is just the beginning of a series of extreme weather events that are linked to climate change ... Africa pollutes least and suffers most from climate change," said Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, the director general of African Risk Capacity, an agency set up by the African Union to help governments better plan for disasters and mitigate their impact.

Poor people living in makeshift settlements built on unstable, steep-sided gorges around Durban were worst affected by the floods. Most have inadequate or no drainage systems and homes are sometimes flimsy shacks that offer little protection against the elements.

Fernaaz Hussain, a 35-year-old coordinator for aid agency Islamic Relief, who lives in Durban, said she had first thought the rain was just part of the city's tropical weather, but became worried when it did not stop.

"It was just relentless. There was just sheet after sheet and you couldn't see anything beyond. It just did not stop. It just got worse and worse. I have never seen anything like it in my life. The rain was so heavy and the wind so strong we feared the windows [would] break," Hussain said.

She described shipping containers floating down motorways and an oil tanker washed up on Durban's famous beach.

"You can't do anything to help yourself. You feel just totally powerless. And tomorrow it could happen again and there's nothing we could do," she said.

Experts say the impact of the climate crisis is increasingly obvious across Africa, with tens of millions suffering from drought in the Sahel and parts of east Africa, while the continent's southeastern coast is hit by intense storms.

The World Weather Attribution (WWA) network of scientists, which has pioneered ways to understand the causes of extreme weather events, said climate change had made the heavy rains along Africa's south eastern coastline both heavier and more likely.

"Again we are seeing how the people with the least responsibility for climate change are bearing the brunt of the impacts," said WWA co-founder Friederike Otto, of the Grantham Institute at Imperial College London.

After Tropical Storm Ana smashed into the region in January, Tropical Cyclone Batsirai hit Madagascar in early February, followed in quick succession by Tropical Storm Dumako and Tropical Cyclones Emnati and Gombe.

WWA scientists used weather observations and computer simulations to compare rainfall patterns under today's climate to that of the pre-industrial area, before global heating.

They focused on two of the wettest periods – during Storm Ana in Malawi and Mozambique and during Cyclone Batsirai in Madagascar.

"In both cases, the results show that rainfall associated with the storms was made more intense by climate change and that episodes of extreme rainfall such as these have become more frequent," WWA said in a report of their findings.

Their conclusions matched broader climate research showing that global heating can increase the frequency and intensity of rainfall, though determining exactly how much climate change influences the extreme events is made difficult by a shortage of high quality historical rainfall records for the region.

The South African Weather Service said that although it was impossible to attribute an individual event to the climate crisis, “globally, all forms of severe and extreme weather ... are becoming more frequent and more extreme than in the recent past (as a direct result of global warming and associated climate change). In other words, heavy rain events such as the current incident can ... be expected to recur in the future and with increasing frequency.”

Many countries in Africa are poorly prepared for such disasters.

Though the most industrialised country on the continent, South Africa has struggled to deliver timely and efficient help to flood victims. One reason for the shortage of water among those displaced by the floods in and around Durban there is that around half of the local government’s fleet of 100 water tankers were found to be inoperable when officials ordered their deployment last week. Thousands of troops have now been deployed to assist the aid operation.

Analysts say extreme weather events can contribute to political instability across the continent. In South Africa, repeated failure to offer timely and effective relief to victims has exacerbated a general lack of faith in the African National Congress, in power since 1994.

“It’s just been normal people helping each other. I’ve had more support from strangers. I won’t even ask the government. The funds always go missing and never reach the right people,” said Husain.

Police have been forced to use teargas to disperse protesters angry at a lack of assistance from authorities.

“It is only because ANC officials regularly fail to care in desperate moments such as these that so many people are convinced that the party is hopelessly corrupt and that even the flood relief funds will be stolen,” wrote commentator Stephen Grootes in an editorial on the Daily Maverick news website.

Sean Christie of Médecins Sans Frontières said the NGO was working with local health authorities to supply nurses and counsellors to flood victims.

“On psychosocial mental health, we have seen lots and lots of need,” he told the Guardian.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Scientists: orbital space must be protected</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/apr/22/orbital-space-earth-protected-scientists-satellites">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/apr/22/orbital-space-earth-protected-scientists-satellites</a>
GIST	<p>The orbital space around Earth must urgently be protected by environmental rules and regulations akin to those that safeguard the planet’s land, seas and air, leading scientists say.</p> <p>An international team of researchers warn that a dramatic rise in the number of satellites is polluting the night sky for astronomers and stargazers, while increasing the risk of objects colliding in space and potentially even striking people or aircraft when they fall back to Earth.</p> <p>Much of the concern is driven by the surge in mega-constellations, which involve placing tens of thousands of satellites in low Earth orbit to deliver broadband internet and other services.</p> <p>While companies such as SpaceX and OneWeb are leading the way, others are interested, including Rwanda, which recently filed an application to launch 327,000 satellites in a single project.</p> <p>Writing in <a href="#">Nature Astronomy</a>, scientists from the UK, US, Canada and the Netherlands warn the number of satellites in low Earth orbit could exceed 100,000 by 2030, disrupting the work of astronomers and reshaping our view of the heavens as the number of satellites seen as “fake stars” starts to rival the number of real stars seen with the naked eye.</p>

“We really need to get our act together. We need to see where have we got regulations that we’re not applying properly, and where do we need new regulations?” said the lead author, Andy Lawrence, a regius professor of astronomy at the University of Edinburgh.

“This is about recognising that the problems we see in orbit are the same as those we see when we worry about the land, the oceans and the atmosphere. We need to knock heads together and say how can we solve this problem.”

Among the proposals are regulations based on a satellite’s space traffic footprint and limits on the carrying capacity of different orbits.

In late 2018, about 2,000 active satellites circled Earth. That number has nearly doubled in the past two years with SpaceX launches alone. All have gone into the most congested low Earth orbit, which reaches from 100-2,000km above Earth. In 2019, the European Space Agency [moved its orbiting Aeolus observatory](#) to avoid colliding with a SpaceX satellite, the first time it had swerved around an active satellite. Last year, the Chinese [moved their space station twice](#) because of similar concerns.

The scientists argue that while there is robust regulation to ensure satellites are launched safely and transmit signals only within certain frequency bands, there is almost nothing to govern the impact of satellites on the night sky, astronomy, Earth’s atmosphere or the orbital environment.

The researchers describe how light reflecting off satellites can ruin astronomical observations by leaving streaks across images, while their broadcasts can drown out the faint, natural radio signals that astronomers study to understand some of the most exotic objects in the cosmos. But the visible presence of so many satellites also undermines the ability to enjoy the night sky, they argue, an act the International Astronomical Union asserts should be a fundamental right.

There are other concerns too. The risk of falling satellite debris causing damage to property or harm to life today is relatively low. But the danger will notch upwards as more satellites re-enter Earth’s atmosphere at the end of their lives, with potentially lethal consequences.

“The first aircraft strike or ground casualty is only a matter of time,” the researchers warn. Yet another issue is rocket launch emissions which include carbon dioxide, nitric oxide and soot.

“The problem of increasing debris and congestion in Earth orbit poses a real challenge for the governance of human space activity,” said Chris Newman, a professor of space law and policy at the University of Northumbria.

“The breadth of new actors and increased geopolitical tensions mean that a binding international treaty is a long way off. In any event, the law can only take us so far. Countries and companies that are active in space need to demonstrate responsible leadership.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Europe warmest summer on record in 2021</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/europe-saw-warmest-summer-on-record-in-2021/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/europe-saw-warmest-summer-on-record-in-2021/</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN (AP) — Scientists say last summer was the hottest summer on record in Europe, with temperatures a full 1 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than the average for the previous three decades.</p> <p>A report released Friday by the European Union’s Copernicus Climate Change Service found that while spring 2021 was cooler than average, the summer months were marked by “severe and long-lasting heatwaves” that saw numerous new temperature records, including an unprecedented 48.8 C (119.8 F) measured in Sicily last August.</p>

	<p>The prolonged high temperatures contributed to wildfires such as those seen in Siberia, Greece and Turkey last year, and experts say it increased the likelihood of heavy rainfall of the kind that led to deadly flooding in Belgium and Germany last July more likely.</p> <p>Sea surface temperatures last year were higher than at any time since at least 1992 in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and parts of the Baltic Sea, where the mercury rose more than 5 C (9 F) above average during the summer months.</p> <p>Annual wind speeds in parts of western and central Europe were among the lowest since at least 1979, the Copernicus Climate Change Service said. This led to a reduction in the estimated potential for wind power — one of the main sources of renewable energy that European countries are banking on to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation.</p> <p>The agency’s findings are based on ground-based weather stations and satellite observations dating back to 1950.</p> <p>Globally, the report showed that 2021 was ranked between the 7th and 5th warmest year on record, depending on the dataset used.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/24 WHO: mystery liver disease outbreak</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-1-child-has-died-in-mystery-liver-disease-outbreak/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/who-1-child-has-died-in-mystery-liver-disease-outbreak/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BERLIN (AP) — The World Health Organization says at least one death has been reported in connection with a mysterious liver disease outbreak affecting children in Europe and the United States.</p> <p>The U.N. health agency said late Saturday that it has so far received reports of at least 169 cases of “acute hepatitis of unknown origin” from a dozen countries.</p> <p>The cases were reported in children aged one month to 16 years old, and 17 of those who fell ill required liver transplants. WHO didn’t say in which country the death occurred.</p> <p>The first cases were recorded in Britain, where 114 children have been sickened.</p> <p>“It is not yet clear if there has been an increase in hepatitis cases, or an increase in awareness of hepatitis cases that occur at the expected rate but go undetected,” WHO said in a statement.</p> <p>Experts say the cases may be linked to a virus commonly associated with colds, but further research is ongoing.</p> <p>“While adenovirus is a possible hypothesis, investigations are ongoing for the causative agent,” WHO said, noting that the virus has been detected in at least 74 of the cases. At least 20 of the children tested positive for the coronavirus.</p> <p>WHO said affected countries are stepping up their surveillance of hepatitis cases in children.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/22 Half-million tires pollute Puget Sound</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/article260676432.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/article260676432.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Tires with toxic substances lurk in Washington waters, harming the wildlife and creating a problem that needs to be cleaned up.</p> <p>There are an estimated half-million tires in Puget Sound that have been leeching harmful substances into the water for about 50 years, according to Jim Trask, president of Washington Scuba Alliance.</p>



	<p>The alliance is a group of scuba divers and advocates who work with local governments and officials to create underwater preserves and protect marine life. They say they have removed 1,800 pounds of trash from Washington waters since 1992.</p> <p>“It can take four to six years of steady requests for state funding for the 24 sites along the Puget Sound that have tires to be removed,” Trask said.</p> <p>The non-profit alliance uses remotely operated vehicles and sonar scanning technology to locate tires and estimate the vast number still in Washington’s waters. Locating the tires is only the first step, as removal requires construction companies and equipment. Then they need to be transported to a hazardous waste facility in Portland, according to Trask.</p> <p>During the 1970s, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources says tires were used to create artificial reefs believed to be beneficial for wildlife. These tire reefs were created in Puget Sound, as well as around the world. Over time, the tire materials broke down and contaminated the waters and wildlife.</p> <p>“Zinc, copper, oil-based plasticizers, paints and pigments containing zinc and titanium oxides, and, paraphenyldiamines (ozone scavengers), are some of the additives leaching from the broken up tires into the water and sediments of Puget Sound. Some of these substances are known to be toxic to aquatic organisms,” the DNR statement notes.</p> <p>Throughout multiple underwater clean-up projects, Washington Scuba Alliance has removed tires, creosote pilings and other toxic items that bring harmful substances into the water.</p> <p>Coho salmon are particularly at risk from a newly discovered chemical in tires called 6PPD-quinone, according to researchers at the University of Washington.</p> <p>The toxic chemical travels through the salmon’s circulatory systems, throughout multiple organs, their hearts and their brains.</p> <p>The researchers were unsure if the chemical can cause less harmful toxic effects other than immediate death, which are more difficult to observe.</p> <p>They are also uncertain about the toxicity level to humans. An interactive map of tire reefs in Puget Sound has been created by Coastal Sensing and Survey, a geophysical organization that locates and maps underwater objects.</p> <p>Tire clean-ups are high priority, but creosote pilings are also releasing toxic chemicals into the waters. The DNR and the scuba alliance say those efforts are also underway.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Fentanyl circulates in unusual form</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/new-warning-issued-as-fentanyl-circulates-in-unusual-form">https://komonews.com/news/local/new-warning-issued-as-fentanyl-circulates-in-unusual-form</a>
GIST	<p>Fentanyl is circulating on the streets in rock and powdered form and leading to a string of overdoses in King County and potentially beyond.</p> <p>Kitsap County Coroner Jeff Wallis is concerned this dangerous variation will turn up in his community next.</p> <p>“To see it in almost pure form is extremely alarming especially if people think they're getting a stimulant like cocaine,” Wallis said.</p> <p>Fentanyl is most often pressed into pills but a powdered form has begun circulating in King County.</p>

	<p>“Seattle's been seeing the powdered form that was sent out in the alert today and they've attributed that to several overdoses over the last week,” Wallis said Friday.</p> <p>History has shown that overdose substances in King County generally migrate to Kitsap County within a week, so this laced powder is likely already in circulation in our communities, according to a press release issued by Kitsap County.</p> <p>The regional head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration said stopping these fentanyl dealers is a top priority.</p> <p>“They want people to be addicted. They want people to be substance use dependent so that they buy more so to do that they have to mix in more fentanyl,” said Special Agent in Charge Frank Tarentino.</p> <p>The state health department reports more than 2,000 overdose deaths last year, which represents a 66 percent increase over 2019.</p> <p>For people who are going to use drugs, the advice from health official is not use alone, have naloxone available and call 911 immediately if there are any signs of problems.</p>
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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Atlanta: 5 teens shot outside restaurant</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/24/five-teens-shot-Atlanta-Waffle-House/8221650816299/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/24/five-teens-shot-Atlanta-Waffle-House/8221650816299/</a>
GIST	<p>April 24 (UPI) -- Multiple teenagers were shot outside a Waffle House restaurant near Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park. Five people aged 15-19 including males and females were injured but in stable condition following the shooting, Atlanta Police Deputy Chief Timothy Peek said in a news conference.</p> <p>Peek said police were called to the area Saturday night in response to a report of someone being shot and police found three people with gunshot wounds when they arrived at the scene at around 10 p.m. on Saturday.</p> <p>Police later determined that two more people had taken themselves to a nearby hospital.</p> <p>The two were believed to have taken a vehicle at gunpoint from a valet in the area to drive to the hospital, Peek said.</p> <p>The motive for the shooting "has not been established at this particular point in time" but Peek said it was the result of "some type of altercation."</p> <p>Three weapons and the stolen vehicle were recovered from the scene and Peek added that several scooters were also found after 911 had received calls about juveniles on scooters in the area "that very well could have been shooting."</p> <p>Peek said it was not immediately clear whether the calls about the scooters were related to the shooting but said it would be part of the investigation into the incident.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 South Carolina officer killed in shooting</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/24/South-Carolina-police-officer-killed-shooting-suspect-dead/5411650827861/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2022/04/24/South-Carolina-police-officer-killed-shooting-suspect-dead/5411650827861/</a>
GIST	<p>April 24 (UPI) -- A police officer was shot and killed while responding to a domestic disturbance early Sunday morning and the suspect also killed himself, police said.</p>

	<p>Cayce Police Officer Roy Andrew Barr, 28, was killed while responding to a domestic disturbance in the city at around 2:48 a.m. after the suspect opened fire, Police Chief Chris Cowan said in a press conference Sunday.</p> <p>"Our hearts are breaking in Cayce. Officer Drew Barr has been an important part of the Cayce family since 2016," Cayce Mayor Elise Partin said in a news conference. "All of our Cayce officers, our Cayce team and our Cayce citizens mourn with Officer Barr's family."</p> <p>Police identified Austin Henderson, 36, as the other person who died at the scene.</p> <p>Cowan said Henderson killed himself after a seven-hour negotiation and the coroner's office confirmed the cause of death.</p> <p>Barr joined the Cayce Police Department in 2016 and was promoted to the k-9 division in 2020. He worked with a dog named, Molly, that performs tracking and narcotics functions.</p> <p>"He loved his dog, Molly, and he loved his job. He loved being a K-9 officer, and he was good at it," Cowan said.</p> <p>Barr was previously shot during a car chase with a suspect in May 2017, shortly after he joined the force.</p> <p>Before joining the police force he was a captain with the Monetta Volunteer Fire Department.</p> <p>"You were a great friend to all who had the privilege to know you," the Cayce Fire Department said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Calif. deputies seize 92lbs illicit fentanyl</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-california-92-pounds-seized/">https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fentanyl-california-92-pounds-seized/</a>
GIST	<p>California detectives seized around 92.5 pounds of illicit fentanyl in a massive drug bust, the Alameda County Sheriff's Department <a href="#">announced</a> Saturday. Officials showed images of the synthetic opioids seized in the operation on social media.</p> <p>According to spokesman Sergeant Ray Kelly, raids on Friday revealed a major fentanyl manufacturing lab, CBS San Francisco <a href="#">reports</a>. One suspect has been arrested in connection with the operation while a second is at large, according to CBS San Francisco.</p> <p>Police said the drugs were recovered in Oakland and Hayward, California and were "headed for the streets of the Bay Area."</p> <p>The amount of fentanyl seized is equivalent to 42,000 grams, authorities said. According to the <a href="#">Drug Enforcement Administration</a>, one kilogram of fentanyl has the potential to kill 500,000 people. The synthetic opioid is up to 100 times more potent than morphine and is considered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as the primary driver of overdose deaths in the United States.</p> <p>"This is a glimpse of the fentanyl epidemic," the Alameda County Sheriff's Department said on Twitter Saturday.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Self-described incel jailed 30mo. for threats</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/self-described-incel-sentenced-to-30-months-for-threats-including-references-to-spree-killer/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/self-described-incel-sentenced-to-30-months-for-threats-including-references-to-spree-killer/</a>
GIST	Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that DAVID KAUFMAN, a/k/a "David Khalifa," a/k/a "John Morray," a/k/a "Big Man," a self-identified

“Incel,” was sentenced to 30 months in prison, after pleading guilty to stalking multiple victims between October 2019 and August 2020. U.S. District Judge Nelson S. Román imposed today’s sentence.

U.S. Attorney Damian Williams said: “David Kaufman, a self-described ‘Incel,’ or ‘Involuntary Celibate,’ expressed his hatred of women by terrorizing and harassing his victims through threats of violence. The Court’s sentence sends a clear message to the public that perpetrators of violence against women will be held accountable for their crimes.”

According to the Complaint, Indictment, other documents in the public record, as well as statements made in public court proceedings:

KAUFMAN self-identifies as an “Incel” or “Involuntary Celibate,” which refers to a group of domestic extremists who adhere to a violent and misogynist ideology of male supremacy. Incels believe they are entitled to sex with women and to women’s bodies, and they blame women for refusing to have sex with them. Incels have an active online community and over the last eight years, Incels also have committed acts of violence against women around the world, including in the United States. For example, in 2014, a self-proclaimed Incel named Elliot Rodger declared a “War on Women” and killed six people and injured fourteen others near a college campus in California. Prior to these attacks, Rodger posted a video manifesto online, in which he explained that he planned his attack to punish women for rejecting him and for depriving him of sex, and to punish sexually active men because he envied them.

In or about 2019 and 2020, KAUFMAN harassed, threatened, and stalked numerous victims. In or about February 2019, KAUFMAN sent a bomb, rape, and death threat to a female victim. A few months later, beginning in or about October 2019, KAUFMAN sent two victims (“Victim-1” and “Victim-2”), among others, violent and threatening messages using over 50 social media accounts. In these messages, KAUFMAN self-identified as an Incel, expressed his hatred of women, and threatened to commit acts of violence. For example:

- On or about June 24, 2020, KAUFMAN sent the following message to Victim-1: “Hey wanna hear a joke? What’s worse than 10 Stacy’s nailed to one tree? One Stacy nailed to ten trees [laughing crying face emoji].” “Stacy” is an Incel term that refers to an attractive female who rejects or refuses to have sex with an Incel, is hated by Incels, and is targeted by Incels for harassment, vitriol, humiliation, and violence.
- On or about June 29, 2020, KAUFMAN sent a series of messages to Victim-2. These messages included an image of one of Elliot Rodger’s victims, a deceased female who had been stabbed to death, accompanied by the following message: “This is what happened when a woman said ‘no’ to Elliot Rodger . . . Hopefully [Victim-1] never said no to someone just like Elliot Rodger.”
- In or about July 2020, KAUFMAN posted the following messages: “Don’t piss off BIG MAN” and “When [Victim-1] and I are dead, we’ll be in heaven together forever.”
- On or about July 11, 2020, KAUFMAN sent the following message to Victim-1: “Women have done nothing but spit in my face. Soon I’ll be getting a gun.”
- On or about July 12, 2020, KAUFMAN posted the following messages: “A beautiful environment is the darkest hell, if you have to experience it all alone . . . –Elliot Rodger” and “I don’t think [Victim-1] will be laughing too much later on.”

KAUFMAN also created social media accounts using the first and last names of Victim-1 and Victim-2, respectively, and impersonated Victim-1 and Victim-2 online.

In the summer of 2020, law enforcement officers approached KAUFMAN and told him to stop harassing Victim-1 and Victim-2. On or about July 14, 2020, KAUFMAN was arrested on state criminal charges and an order of protection was issued in Westchester County prohibiting KAUFMAN from, among other things, communicating or contacting Victim-1 or Victim-2.

Notwithstanding the court order of protection, state charges, and multiple warnings by law enforcement, KAUFMAN continued to harass, threaten, and stalk Victim-1 and Victim-2 until he was federally charged and arrested in August 2020. KAUFMAN also conducted online surveillance of Victim-1’s residence and researched how to illegally purchase a gun and assemble a semi-automatic rifle.

	In addition to the prison sentence, KAUFMAN, 28, of Peekskill, New York, was sentenced to 3 years supervised release, with first six months of home detention, the conditions of which include orders of protection prohibiting KAUFMAN from, among other things, contacting certain victims and their family members.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Study: Philippines 2M kids online sex abuse</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkp5pn/sexual-abuse-online-the-philippines">https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkp5pn/sexual-abuse-online-the-philippines</a>
GIST	<p>An estimated 2 million children in the Philippines may have experienced online sexual harassment and abuse in 2020, a new study suggests, shedding light on the scale of a longstanding problem in a country once <a href="#">touted</a> by the UN as “the global epicenter of the livestream sexual abuse trade.”</p> <p>Surveying 950 Filipino children aged 12 to 17 from a “population-representative household survey” in early 2021, researchers found that one in every five of them experienced “grave instances” of online sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes being blackmailed to engage in sexual activities, someone sharing their sexually explicit images without consent, or being coerced to engage in sexual activities with money or gifts.</p> <p>Expanding these findings to the country’s population of nearly 110 million, with some 40 million minors, the ECPAT International, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti study, called <a href="#">Disrupting Harm</a> and published on April 21, arrived at the 2 million estimate.</p> <p>“Disrupting Harm is the first research ever in the Philippines (even globally) providing this level of insight into children’s experiences of online sexual exploitation and abuse,” a spokesperson for the study’s researchers told VICE World News.</p> <p>Three of every 20 children surveyed—15 percent—said they had been asked for images showing their private parts. More than one in ten—11 percent—said they had been offered money or gifts in exchange for images showing their private parts.</p> <p>A similar number said they had been offered money or gifts to meet in person to do something sexual, while 13 percent said they were threatened or blackmailed for the same. Another 13 percent said they’d had sexual images of them shared without their permission within the previous year, while 17 percent said they were asked to talk about sex against their will.</p> <p>Boys and girls experienced these at roughly equal proportions, the study noted. While these requests were sometimes made by friends, family members, ex-partners and acquaintances, in almost all instances the majority of requests came from people unknown to the child.</p> <p>The internet being used to sexually prey on children has long been a problem in the Philippines. Recent years have seen a number of online sex dens preying on minors in the country <a href="#">busted</a> through international law enforcement cooperation. Often, the dens were run by <a href="#">relatives or family members</a> of the children themselves, who were driven to desperation by poverty. On the other end were <a href="#">users in rich countries</a>, who would pay as little as \$3 to have the victims perform for them.</p> <p>The pandemic worsened the problem. The Philippines had struggled to contain the virus with intermittent but prolonged lockdowns that forced children to stay indoors for months on end. A resulting economic recession also left many families without an income, heightening the conditions that propel the online sex trade. A 2021 report by WeProtect Global alliance noted a <a href="#">265-percent increase</a> in online child sexual abuse between March and May 2020, when much of the country was in lockdown.</p> <p>Last week’s <i>Disrupting Harm</i> study found that 95 percent of children aged 12 to 17 in the Philippines are online, the highest among 13 countries across eastern and southern Africa and Southeast Asia researchers surveyed. Known as “the social media capital of the world,” the country has 89 million active social media</p>

users according to government data, and 70 million of them are on Facebook. Unsurprisingly, much of the online sexual harassment and abuse experienced by children in the study—at least 95 percent—was on Facebook or Facebook Messenger.

“Connectivity can make it easier for offenders to contact, target and harm children,” the spokesperson said.

Despite the Philippines’ increased efforts in recent years to better understand the problem, the researchers said “around a third of children do not disclose or report their most recent abuse with anyone.” More than half (55 percent) of the children surveyed did not know how to report harmful content on social media, while 44 percent said they did not know where to get help if they or a friend were subjected to sexual harassment or abuse.

### **Catching Pedophiles Using AI**

Meanwhile, local authorities are already hard-pressed to keep up with the cases that are reported, which exceeded 12,000 in 2019—merely the tip of the iceberg, considering the study’s findings.

“We really lack manpower, so much so that one social worker may be responsible for around 300 cases of child survivors,” said a social worker quoted in the study.

The research spokesperson said “increased investments in law enforcement and justice sectors” was one potential way to combat the issue.

“Closer cooperation with internet service providers and better accessibility to different intelligence sources would allow resources to be deployed to proactive investigations, including covert investigations, dark web monitoring, and open-source intelligence gathering,” they said.

The researchers emphasized that children and their caregivers must be informed about threats lurking in the online world, so that abuse doesn’t occur.

“Prevention is vital to tackling online child sexual exploitation and abuse, and proactive responses are needed,” the spokesperson said, adding there should be efforts to inform children, parents and communities about the prevalence of online sexual abuse, the laws around it, and how to handle reports of such abuse.

“Children first and foremost rely on their interpersonal networks to disclose abuse. Help strengthen this protective strategy by funding more community-level programs that facilitate disclosure and reporting of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.”

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HEADLINE	<b>04/25 Crime crisis on public transit systems</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/public-transit-crime.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/25/us/public-transit-crime.html</a>
GIST	<p>CHICAGO — For months, Anna Balla, 47, tolerated the unruly behavior she says has become commonplace when riding the “L” downtown: smoking, harassment and even a stranger’s uninvited use of her shoulder to vault himself into a spot in a crowded Chicago train.</p> <p>But it was a ride in March that made her swear off the trains completely. At a busy stop in the heart of the Loop during rush hour, she saw a young shirtless man yanking a woman and hitting her with an empty beer bottle as she cowered and screamed on the platform. Ms. Balla bolted from the packed car and fled to the street.</p> <p>“I was just worried that someone was going to pull out a gun, or if the cops arrived, it would become a shootout,” said Ms. Balla, a museum registrar in Chicago. “It had that feel to it.”</p> <p>Just as a number of major cities are trying to lure people back to formerly bustling downtowns, leaders are confronting transit crime rates that have risen over prepandemic levels in <a href="#">New York City</a>, the San</p>



Francisco Bay Area, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. Earlier this month, [a shooting on a subway train in Brooklyn](#) injured 23 people. In other cities, stories of violent assaults, muggings and stabbings on buses and trains dominate the evening news and worried conversations in neighborhood apps.

Low ridership has left many passengers saying they feel more vulnerable than before. In Philadelphia, the number of certain serious crimes reported on public transit is higher than before the pandemic, and in New York about equal to previous levels, even though ridership in both places is significantly lower. In other cities, there are fewer crimes being reported than in 2019, but the crime rate is up because there are so few passengers.

The crisis on public transit systems threatens the nation's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic: Restoring confidence in subways, commuter rail and buses, officials say, could help rescue local economies from two years of the doldrums, encourage more workers to return to urban offices and make tourists comfortable moving about cities freely. In densely populated places like Chicago and New York, where public transit is essential for millions of people, the well-being of the system can feel like a proxy for the city itself.

Mayors, transit agencies and police departments are wrestling with ways to reduce crime and restore the confidence of commuters, but the fates of public transit and downtowns, experts say, can be intertwined in complicated ways: If more people return to public transit as they go back to offices and shops, trains can feel safer; yet if transit systems feel unsafe, people are reluctant to go back to the downtowns that hollowed out amid Covid.

In Chicago, where the nation's second-largest public transportation system served an average of 800,000 riders on weekdays in March, crime on the city's trains and buses has spiked this year — and even before the pandemic, serious crime was rising on public transit. Last month, Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced heightened security and additional police officers to address fears from riders.

"It's one of the most important things we can do to actually change the perception of the city overall," Kevin Ryan, the vice president of security for the Chicago Transit Authority, said of safety on the public transit system. "It's the first thing a lot of people who are coming into the city see. It's the lifeblood of a lot of the underserved or poorer communities that don't have private vehicles who rely on this. It's key that the C.T.A. is a safe system."

The number of crimes reported on public transit in Chicago is about half what it was prepandemic, he said, but ridership has also fallen by about half. The drop in riders on many public transit systems is essential to the rates of crime on those systems: In Los Angeles, the raw number of crimes recorded in 2021 was lower than in the years before the pandemic, according to data provided by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, but because the number of riders plunged, the rate of crimes per ride was higher.

In other cities, like Philadelphia, actual incidents of certain crimes on public transit have been mounting throughout the pandemic. In 2021, SEPTA police recorded 86 aggravated assaults, up from 46 in 2019. Robberies increased to 217 from 118 during that period. Crime numbers from the first months of 2022 indicate a slight decline in incidents of aggravated assault.

The challenges are not limited to transportation, said Jamie Gauthier, a City Council member in Philadelphia, but part of a broader trend of rising crime and violence across the city.

"We have an opioid epidemic and we have a housing crisis," Ms. Gauthier said, "so the things that we've been seeing in the city, writ large, have also migrated into our public transit system."

Part of the rising worry about crime, experts said, may reflect changing perceptions by commuters, many of whom at least paused their usual trips on buses and trains during the pandemic. The prospect of going back to public transit has left some people assessing safety in ways they might not ever have considered when daily commutes were a given. Adding to the tension for some passengers was the rollback of mask

rules on public transit in many cities after a judge in Florida struck down federal mask mandates on airplanes and public transportation.

Christopher B. Leinberger, an emeritus professor of business at George Washington University who studies urban spaces and transit, said the most effective way to reduce violence on public transit systems was to get more people back to riding them. “Having lots of folks from all different incomes riding mass transit is the best way to suppress crime,” he said. “Obviously the police have a major role to play, but it really comes down to having people, lots of eyes, on different people.”

Long before the pandemic, several public transit systems were already challenged by funding problems, high maintenance costs and stagnant ridership. Then came the virus, which set off a sudden drop in passengers amid lockdowns and closures, starved transit agencies of revenue and raised questions about the fate of some systems. Now the shaky returns, spurred in part by hybrid office work, and the rising crime rates in some systems are extending that uncertainty.

In Los Angeles, the crime rate on the county’s metro system has increased over the course of the pandemic, adding fuel to long-burning debates on policing, homelessness and mental health.

“Most of our issues on Metro are dealing with people who are unsheltered,” said Hilda Solis, a Los Angeles County supervisor who is also chair of the Metro board. “So it’s more of a housing problem than a law enforcement problem.”

Darrell Owens, an East Bay Transit Riders Union member and transit advocate in the Bay Area, said public transit was sometimes the only place Americans encounter strangers, meaning that fears about safety there are often disproportionate to the perils of driving, which is often the most dangerous regular activity for Americans.

“The public is suffering in American cities,” he said. “That’s why American transit is so fraught: It’s one of the only times secluded people see other members of the public.”

In Washington, the crime rate on the Metro has dropped this year from earlier in the pandemic but remains higher than before the pandemic. The number of mental-health-related calls has increased especially drastically.

On metro Atlanta’s transit system, MARTA, officials have sought new ways to handle people who took refuge on public transit during the pandemic. In August 2020, the system started a program in which officials said uniformed, unarmed security staff would help homeless people by directing them to shelters, counseling and treatment when necessary.

“I think you’ll see more and more of that throughout the transit world,” M. Scott Kreher, MARTA’s police chief, said.

On the front lines of the nation’s public transit challenges are workers. They had already faced higher risk from the virus because their jobs kept them in public, and some systems have reported struggles to rebuild their work forces. Public transit workers say that harassment — physical assault, threats and objects thrown at them — remains prevalent despite drops in ridership.

“Things have gotten worse — you’ve got to get back to some stability and you’ve got to make it safer for people,” said Eric Dixon, president of the union that represents train employees in Chicago, who has called for a more robust police presence, and additional conductors on trains, to combat crime.

Kimberly Benedetto has experienced her fair share of harassment over her 23 years driving buses for Philadelphia’s system — passengers yelling at her and even spitting in her direction. But none of that compares with what she has seen over the last couple of years.

	<p>"I feel like things have gotten out of control," said Ms. Benedetto, who said she experienced one particularly frightening incident in September by a teenager who threatened to assault her over a request to wear a mask, a requirement at the time.</p> <p>"I will not stay one day past 30 years," said Ms. Benedetto, referring to the tenure she needs to receive her full pension. "I'll drive school buses — I just want to get away from this."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Spokane, WA state big spike car thefts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-washington-state-spike-car-thefts/293-2be6f2f1-b5cc-4966-8f6c-6d2733d8029e">https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-washington-state-spike-car-thefts/293-2be6f2f1-b5cc-4966-8f6c-6d2733d8029e</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — The city of Spokane, Spokane County and the state of Washington are all seeing a big spike in car thefts.</p> <p>New data from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs shows that vehicle thefts increased 88% for the first three months of this year when compared to the same period last year.</p> <p>Spokane County is reporting a 53% spike. In the city of Spokane, SPD reports an 83% increase. All three agencies say they believe changes in the law emboldened criminals and played a role in this crime spike.</p> <p>"The criminal knows that we can't pursue them and even if we could pursue them, it's not a crime that we're allowed to pursue anymore," Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich said.</p> <p>However, when it comes to stolen vehicles, Knezovich also says chop shops are less of an issue for the Spokane area.</p> <p>Instead, he described these thefts as more of a "black market taxi service" with most car thieves stealing them to do other things and then ditching the car.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Data: violent crime Spokane Co. increasing</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/new-data-shows-increases-in-various-crimes/293-686f7c12-d5f2-4b8d-9da9-f420d5f975f7">https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/new-data-shows-increases-in-various-crimes/293-686f7c12-d5f2-4b8d-9da9-f420d5f975f7</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — New data from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs shows there have been changes in a variety of crime percentages since the 2021 report, including <a href="#">several notable increases</a>.</p> <p>Violent crime is one area that has seen some dramatic increases from reported rape to homicides.</p> <p>In Spokane County as a whole, aggravated assault has increased 21% from last year. So far in 2022, there have been 91 reported assaults. This is 16 more than the previous year around the same time.</p> <p>Reported rapes in the county have increased 63%, with 26 rapes being reported so far in 2022. This is 10 more than this same time last year.</p> <p>Criminal homicide has increased from two murders in 2021 to four murders in 2022, for a 100% increase.</p> <p>Property crime, on the other hand, has actually seen a decrease in percentages.</p> <p>Robbery is down 34% from 29 to 19, and more specifically, garage theft is down 35% from 122 to 79 since this time last year.</p> <p>The only area of property crime that has increased is in car theft, which is up 55% compared to last year. Looking inward, the city of Spokane reported an 83% increase in car theft.</p>

	<p>The city of Spokane, Spokane County and the state of Washington say they believe changes in the law this year – especially in the case of car theft – emboldened criminals and played a role in the crime increase.</p> <p>"The criminal knows that we can't pursue them and even if we could pursue them, it's not a crime that we're allowed to pursue anymore," Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich said.</p> <p>These statistics are from crimes that took place between April 16, 2021 and the same date of this year.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 WSP: spike smash-grabs hit trailheads</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/spike-in-smash-and-grabs-at-trailheads-prompts-increased-patrols/281-0487321a-ea62-44d2-ab4f-7f49a9e59735">https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/spike-in-smash-and-grabs-at-trailheads-prompts-increased-patrols/281-0487321a-ea62-44d2-ab4f-7f49a9e59735</a>
GIST	<p>SAMMAMISH, Wash. — As the weather gets better, more people are starting to hit the trailheads throughout Western Washington. However, while you're out and about, your car is left all alone in the parking lot, and more and more of them are getting broken into, according to Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>Soaring Eagle Park in Sammamish is Mike Stadther's happy place. Although he admits, his love for hiking these types of trails is declining because of an uptick in smash-and-grab crimes.</p> <p>"It's unfortunate, it takes what should be a really nice day and turns it into something really negative very quick," said Stadther.</p> <p>Washington State Patrol said smash and grabs are happening more often at trailhead parking lots throughout Western Washington just in the past year.</p> <p>"There were tons of smash and grabs through the fall and winter season and it's usually always an uptick in the summer because there's more people that venture out to these trailhead areas," said WSP Trooper Anthony Reese.</p> <p>State troopers said there's several reasons for the jump in smashed windows, including people leaving valuables visible in their cars. Another reason could be there are times law enforcement can't pursue the criminals in question.</p> <p>"Lots of criminals are more emboldened now with some legislation changes they know that law enforcement cannot chase them unless it is a violent crime, property crime is not considered a violent crime," said Trooper Reese.</p> <p>WSP is working with other law enforcement agencies to increase patrols at trailheads. Some communities have even started their own community trailhead patrols to be an extra set of eyes. Stadther said people just need to be better.</p> <p>"They need some help, maybe try to go get help elsewhere, other than coming and taking peoples' things," said Stadther.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Front-end loader used in pot shop robbery</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/deputies-suspects-break-into-dispensary-with-front-end-loader">https://www.q13fox.com/news/deputies-suspects-break-into-dispensary-with-front-end-loader</a>
GIST	<p><b>SEATTLE</b> - <a href="#">King County</a> deputies are investigating a <a href="#">pot shop robbery</a> involving a front-end loader.</p> <p>The sheriff's office says around 6 a.m. Saturday, three suspects crashed a front-end loader into Clutch Cannabis in <a href="#">South Seattle</a>. They went in and reportedly stole \$100 in cash and \$1,000 in cannabis products, then ditched the front-end loader and ran.</p>

	<p>Authorities say no one was injured in the robbery as the shop was closed. The suspects did about \$1,500 in damage to the building.</p> <p>Investigators have not determined where the front-end loader came from.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 'Environmental extremist' arson guilty plea</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/23/us/northwest-former-fugitive-guilty-plea/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/23/us/northwest-former-fugitive-guilty-plea/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>A man linked to environmental extremist acts in the mid 1990s and early 2000s has pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit arson in California and Oregon, and arson in Oregon, according to a <a href="#">news release</a> Friday from the US Department of Justice.</p> <p>According to the DOJ, as well as court documents obtained by CNN, Joseph Mahmoud Dibee, 53, recruited and led groups of environmental extremists to design and execute fires targeting commercial and government-owned animal processing facilities in both California and Oregon.</p> <p>The agency labeled Dibee as an “environmental extremist, arsonist and former fugitive,” in announcing his plea.</p> <p>According to the DOJ news release, in the late 90s, Dibee and his co-conspirators used “incendiary devices” to destroy an Oregon commercial slaughterhouse and meatpacking facility. In 2001, Dibee and others “attempted to destroy” a government-owned wild horse corral in California, the DOJ said.</p> <p>“The conspirators, together known as ‘the Family,’ were ultimately linked to more than 40 criminal acts between 1995 and 2001 and caused more than \$45 million in damages,” according to the DOJ news release.</p> <p>According to the DOJ, Dibee fled the US in 2005, and was arrested in Cuba in 2018 on an Interpol Red Notice, the DOJ noted.</p> <p>An Oregon federal grand jury indicted Dibee in 2006, CNN previously reported.</p> <p>The DOJ assisted multiple federal agencies in the effort to return Dibee to the US, according to the release.</p> <p>According to the release, as well as CNN’s <a href="#">previous reporting</a>, one of Dibee’s alleged co-conspirators, Josephine Sunshine Overaker, remains at large. The FBI has offered a reward up to \$50,000 for information leading to her arrest.</p> <p>The government, according to the DOJ, will recommend Dibee receive a sentence of 87 months in federal prison. He will be sentenced on July 27, the DOJ added.</p> <p>According to the release, the US Attorneys’ Offices for the District of Oregon, Northern District of California, and Western District of Washington and the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Protesters superglue to Starbucks counter</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://ktla.com/news/nationworld/activists-at-seattle-starbucks-superglue-themselves-to-counter-to-protest-upcharge-for-non-dairy-milk/">https://ktla.com/news/nationworld/activists-at-seattle-starbucks-superglue-themselves-to-counter-to-protest-upcharge-for-non-dairy-milk/</a>
GIST	Two activists were arrested on Wednesday after supergluing their hands to the café counters at a Starbucks in Seattle.

The two people were among a group of protestors who entered the coffee shop at the Starbucks headquarters in Seattle to protest the chain's practice of charging extra for customers who request milk alternatives.

"Save the planet, save the cows, stop the vegan upcharge now!" the activists shouted after making their way to the counter, as seen in video livestreamed to Facebook by PETA.

"This week, ahead of Earth Day, Starbucks is failing customers and failing the climate," one of the protestors yells out in the middle of the store. "We're heading into a climate catastrophe, and Starbucks is still charging up to 80 extra cents for people to get the vegan milk, a sustainable option."

The duo remained glued to separate counters inside the Starbucks for less than two hours before police officers unglued their hands. A representative for PETA claims the two have been charged with theft of services and destruction of property, but a spokesperson for the Seattle Police Department said neither person was booked or charged at the scene. Both activists were arrested but released after being interviewed and identified, the police spokesperson told Nexstar.

A representative for the prosecutor's office was not immediately available to confirm the charges against the protestors.

Starbucks has also responded to Wednesday's incident, telling Nexstar that the company respects its "customers' rights to respectfully voice their opinions so long as it does not disrupt our store operations."

PETA's latest stunt comes three weeks after [Paul McCartney](#), a longtime vegetarian and animal-rights activist, partnered with PETA to urge former-Starbucks CEO Kevin Johnson to end the chain's surcharges for alternative milks. (Previous Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz took over for Johnson, who stepped down in early April.)

"My friends at PETA are campaigning for this to happen ... I sincerely hope that for the future of the planet and animal welfare you are able to implement this policy," McCartney wrote in the letter, in part.

PETA has long campaigned against Starbucks' surcharge for plant-based milk, arguing that it not only contributes to the support of dairy farmers, but unfairly discriminates against vegan customers. Also affected are lactose-intolerant customers, ["most of whom are people of color."](#) PETA has previously said.

Starbucks itself acknowledged in Nov. 2021 that ["dairy is the biggest contributor to Starbucks carbon footprint."](#) At the time, Starbucks said it was working on new approaches to [sourcing sustainable dairy](#), but did not announce any plans to scale back on dairy offerings or make it more affordable for customers who request non-dairy options.

Starbucks locations in the U.S. currently charge extra to customize its beverages with non-dairy milk. A "splash" of the same non-dairy milk can be added to certain coffee beverages free of charge, Starbucks says.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 CBP Texas border seizes \$35M in meth</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/us/texas-meth-bust-laredo/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/24/us/texas-meth-bust-laredo/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>A plot to move almost a ton of methamphetamine in a shipment of strawberry puree got crushed when US Customs and Border Protection officers discovered the concealed drugs.</p> <p>On April 12, a CBP officer assigned to the World Trade Bridge in Laredo, Texas, saw a tractor trailer arriving from Mexico hauling a shipment of strawberry puree and referred it for another examination, the agency said.</p>



	<p>“After conducting a thorough secondary examination, which included utilization of non-intrusive inspection (NII) equipment, CBP officers discovered 158 packages containing a total of nearly 1,761 pounds (798.88 kg) of alleged methamphetamine concealed within the shipment. The methamphetamine had an estimated street value of more than \$35.2 million,” CBP said.</p> <p>“This mammoth seizure of methamphetamine underscores the reality of the drug threat we face at the port of entry and the determination of our frontline officers to apply the latest inspections technology coupled with officer experience to keep our border secure,” said Albert Flores, port director for the Laredo Port of Entry.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Arrest: man threatens dictionary company</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/man-arrested-allegedly-threatening-merriam-webster-definition-female/story?id=84253350">https://abcnews.go.com/US/man-arrested-allegedly-threatening-merriam-webster-definition-female/story?id=84253350</a>
GIST	<p>A California man was arrested this week for allegedly threatening to bomb Merriam-Webster's offices and kill its employees over the dictionary publisher's definitions for women, federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>Jeremy David Hanson, 34, of Rossmoor, California, was charged on April 20 with one count of interstate communication of threats to commit violence for alleged online threats that he sent to the company in October, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Massachusetts.</p> <p>Hanson allegedly sent the company several threatening messages through its "Contact us" section on its website and in the comments section on its webpages that corresponded to the word entries for “Girl” and “Woman.” Rachael Rollins, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Massachusetts, said. Rollins said the threats were serious enough to force Merriam-Webster to close its Springfield and New York offices out of an abundance of caution.</p> <p>"We believe Hanson sent a multitude of anonymous threatening and despicable messages related to the LGBTQ community that were intended to evoke fear and division," she said in a statement.</p> <p>Hanson allegedly used the handle “@anonYmous” to post the a message on Oct. 2 on the comment section of Merriam-Webster's webpage for the definition of the word female stating that "Merriam-Webster now tells blatant lies and promotes anti-science propaganda," according to the U.S. Attorney's office.</p> <p>"There is no such thing as 'gender identity.' The imbecile who wrote this entry should be hunted down and shot," he allegedly wrote in the comment section.</p> <p>Hanson also allegedly wrote a message on the "Contact us" page stating the company's headquarters should be "shot up and bombed," federal prosecutors said.</p> <p>"It would be poetic justice to have someone storm your offices and shoot up the place, leaving none of you commies alive,” he allegedly wrote.</p> <p>Hanson posted a similar message on the "Contact us" page on Oct. 8, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.</p> <p>The suspect allegedly sent related threats to other companies, non-profits and individuals including the American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Land O’ Lakes, Hasbro, Inc., IGN Entertainment, the president of the University of North Texas, two professors at Loyola Marymount University and a New York City rabbi, according to prosecutors.</p> <p>"Threats to life are most certainly not protected speech and they cause real fear in victims," Joseph R. Bonavolonta, the Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division, said in a statement.</p> <p>Attorney information for Hanson wasn't immediately available.</p>

	He was released on conditions following a court appearance in the Central District of California, prosecutors said. He is scheduled to appear before U.S. District Court Magistrate Judge Katherine A. Robertson in federal court in Springfield on April 29, according to the U.S. Attorney's office.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 Nigeria illegal oil refinery blast kills 100</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/manhunt-suspects-100-die-nigeria-refinery-blast-84278696">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/manhunt-suspects-100-die-nigeria-refinery-blast-84278696</a>
GIST	<p>ABUJA, Nigeria -- At least 100 people may have died in an explosion at an illegal oil refinery in southeast Nigeria, a local oil official said Sunday as the search intensified for bodies at the site and for two people suspected of being involved in the blast.</p> <p>Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, in a statement, called the explosion a “catastrophe and a national disaster.”</p> <p>The explosion Friday night at the facility in Ohaji-Egbema local government area in Imo state was triggered by a fire at two fuel storage areas where more than 100 people worked, state officials told The Associated Press.</p> <p>Dozens of workers were caught up in the explosion while many others attempted to escape the blaze by running into wooded areas.</p> <p>Those who died in the disaster are estimated to be within “the range of 100,” said Goodluck Opiah, the Imo commissioner for petroleum resources. “A lot of them ran into the bush with the burns and they died there.”</p> <p>Buhari has directed the nation’s security forces “to intensify the clampdown” on such facilities being operated illegally in many parts of southern Nigeria, a spokesperson said in a statement.</p> <p>Although Nigeria is Africa’s largest producer of crude oil, for many years its oil production capacity has been limited by a chronic challenge of oil storage and the operation of illegal refineries.</p> <p>Nigeria lost at least \$3 billion worth of crude oil to theft between January 2021 and February 2022, with shady business operators often avoiding regulators by setting up refineries in remote areas such as the one that exploded in Imo, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) said in March.</p> <p>“There are no arrests yet but the two culprits are on the run with the police now looking for them,” said Declan Emelumbe, the Imo State commissioner for information. Officials did not reveal the identities of the suspects.</p> <p>A mass burial is being planned for those killed in the explosion, many of who “were burnt beyond recognition,” said Emelumbe. Environmental officials have started to fumigate the area.</p> <p>Such disasters are a regular occurrence in Africa’s most populous country, where poverty and unemployment – at 33% according to the latest government estimates – have forced millions of young people into criminal activities.</p> <p>Operating illegal refineries is not as popular in Imo state as it is in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, where militants have gained notoriety for blowing up oil pipelines and kidnapping workers from petroleum companies.</p> <p>As many as 30 illegal oil refineries were busted in the Niger Delta region in just two weeks, Nigeria’s Defense Department said earlier this month when it announced a task force to curb crude oil theft.</p>

	<p>In the aftermath of the explosion in Imo state, the Nigerian ministry of petroleum told The AP there is “a renewed action” to tackle illegal activities in the oil sector.</p> <p>The government and the military are stepping up actions “to minimize the criminalities along the oil production lines,” said Horatius Egua, a senior official at the petroleum ministry.</p> <p>But many of the culprits are not deterred including in Imo state, one of the few places producing oil in Nigeria’s southeast. The problem of illegal refineries “has never been this bad” and remains “difficult to end,” said Opiah, the Imo petroleum commissioner.</p> <p>“It is like asking why kidnapping or armed robbery has not stopped,” he said. “Even with this incident, not many people will be deterred. I am sure more illegal refineries will be cropping up in other places.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/24 UK police: man held in stabbing spree</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/apr/24/bedworth-coventry-man-held-mental-health-act-knife-attack">https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/apr/24/bedworth-coventry-man-held-mental-health-act-knife-attack</a>
GIST	<p>A 33-year-old man who was arrested after at least 10 people were injured in a knife attack has been detained under the Mental Health Act.</p> <p>It comes after disturbances in Bedworth town centre, north of Coventry, on Saturday morning, in which three people suffered stab wounds, Warwickshire police said.</p> <p>After a mental health assessment, the suspect, from Bedworth, was detained. Police believe the man walked along Coventry Road and Gilbert Close, where he attacked at least 10 people shortly before 8am.</p> <p>Officers said the victims identified so far were helping with the investigation. DS Rich Simpkins has appealed for witnesses and injured people to come forward if they had not already done so.</p> <p>He said: “This was a nasty incident which has left a number of people with injuries and I know this will cause the community great concern.</p> <p>“The public can expect to see a heightened police presence in and around Bedworth town centre to provide reassurance while our officers continue to conduct their enquiries.”</p> <p>Several people were in the area at the time and they may have been approached by the man, police said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Police: D.C. shooting suspect found dead</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/22/washington-dc-shooting-injuries-van-ness">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/22/washington-dc-shooting-injuries-van-ness</a>
GIST	<p>A gunman opened fire on random victims from a sniper’s nest on the upper floor of an apartment building near an elite prep school in Washington, wounding four people before taking his own life as police burst into his dwelling.</p> <p>Police said on Friday evening the suspect, Raymond Spencer, 23, of suburban Fairfax, Virginia, was initially identified from video he had posted on social media that appeared to show gunshots fired from the vantage point of an upper-floor window, with the misspelled label: “Shool shooting!”</p> <p>The Washington metropolitan police chief, Robert Contee, told a late-night news conference the video “looks very much to be authentic” but it remained uncertain whether the footage was streamed live or had been posted after it was recorded.</p> <p>Police had issued a bulletin with photographs of Spencer hours earlier saying they were seeking him as a “person of interest” in their investigation.</p>

The school and other properties in the vicinity were placed under a security lockdown, with frightened students texting anxious parents as police mounted a door-to-door search for the suspect.

With help from eyewitness reports, police managed to pinpoint the gunman's position to the fifth floor of a "particular apartment building" and ultimately "breached the location where the suspect took his own life", Contee said.

Police seized more than half a dozen firearms, including several rifles, and large amounts of ammunition in the apartment, which had been arranged in a "sniper-type setup" with a tripod weapons mount, the chief said.

"His intent was to kill and hurt members of our community", but investigators had yet to determine a motive, Contee said, adding that the gunman acted alone.

He said the four victims were shot at random as "they were going about their business ... on the streets of the District of Columbia".

Three people struck by gunfire were taken to area hospitals: a 54-year-old man and a woman in her mid-30s with severe wounds, and a 12-year-old girl wounded in the arm, assistant police chief Stuart Emerman said during an earlier briefing.

A fourth victim, a woman in her mid-60s, was treated on the scene for a slight graze wound, Emerman said.

Eyewitnesses said they heard multiple bursts of gunfire in the upscale Van Ness neighbourhood of north-west Washington next to the Edmund Burke school just as classes were about to be dismissed for the day. Contee said at least 20 rounds were fired.

One eyewitness told local television station WUSA-TV he heard a burst of rapid gunfire lasting about a minute, and saw a woman running out of a building who appeared to have been grazed by a gunshot, followed by other individuals who were apparently wounded.

The eyewitness said he saw other people on the street taking cover behind parked cars and pointing up to a balcony where they presumably believed the gunshots originated.

Video posted on Twitter captured the sound of bursts of rapid gunfire. One witness, identified by a local reporter as Austin Bittle, said he was in a nearby coffee shop when he heard more than 20 gunshots ring out in quick succession before seeing police officers racing toward the scene.

"It was madness. I mean, it's just unbelievable," Jade Moore, an Edmund Burke parent, told WJLA of the incident, which she said left her daughter huddled inside a classroom until police escorted her and other students to a safer part of the campus. "You know, you think they're safe, but you're not safe anywhere."

Authorities said they had no motive for the shooting, which took place along a busy Connecticut Avenue corridor that is also home to several foreign embassies, the Howard University School of Law and a campus of the University of the District of Columbia.

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HEADLINE	04/23 Asian Americans fight rising hate crime
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/apr/23/asian-american-fighting-rising-hate-crime">https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/apr/23/asian-american-fighting-rising-hate-crime</a>
GIST	Arise in Asian American gun ownership. Blocks-long <a href="#">lines for pepper spray</a> in Manhattan Chinatown. Children kept home from school by fearful parents. Elderly people who have stopped leaving their homes. A <a href="#">warning</a> to Filipinos in the US, issued by the Philippine embassy in DC.

Across the US, Asian American communities have been gripped by anger and despair as hate crimes against them have increased sharply – rising by 339% last year compared with 2020, according to the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism. As early as March 2020, the FBI [issued](#) a report predicting a “surge” in hate crimes against Asian Americans, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which happened to originate in an Asian country. Adding fuel to the fire: incendiary and racist language – used by irresponsible politicians and repeated across social media – and geopolitical tensions with China.

“All of those are conditions that have led at other times to terrible anti-Asian violence,” says author and activist Helen Zia.

But what’s different this time, says Zia, is that more people recognize the problem. In the 1980s, Zia helped bring about the first federal civil rights case involving an Asian American: Vincent Chin, a Chinese American man was beaten to death by two white auto-workers who took him for Japanese and blamed Japan for the car industry’s struggles. They were merely fined \$3,000 each for the killing.

Today Asian Americans, the fastest-growing racial or ethnic group in the US, are finally in a position to do more than stock up on pepper spray and hope for the best. Meanwhile, academic research on implicit and unconscious bias, improvements in data collection, and social movements like Black Lives Matter have contributed to greater understanding about racism and bias, and the ways that can translate into hate speech and violence. From the local through federal level, community advocates and other leaders have been organizing, debating, and building support, aimed at combating the ongoing epidemic of anti-Asian hate.

After the Atlanta-area shooting deaths of eight people, six of them Asian women, by a white gunman in March 2021, President Joe Biden [announced](#) a set of actions to respond to anti-Asian violence and xenophobia, and in May, further established the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, “to advance equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities”. Among other actions, the initiative will improve data collection methods that have left Asian people underrepresented in government statistics, and by extension, the resulting programs and policies.

Long-term, many agree that the answer lies in education. In January, Illinois became the first state to require that Asian American history be taught in public schools. New Jersey soon followed, and at least nine other states are considering the same. “Members of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community have made countless contributions to our state and country, yet they are made virtually invisible by our history books,” said four NJ assembly sponsors of the bill in a [joint statement](#). “This erasure ... not only prevents students from gaining a full understanding of our nation’s history, but also opens the door for racial biases that can turn into violence and hatred.”

Kani Ilangovan, a parent and psychiatrist of Make Us Visible NJ, which spearheaded the movement, said she was haunted by events like the [2017 shooting death](#) of Srinivas Kuchibhotla, an engineer from India, at a Kansas restaurant, by a white man who called Kuchibhotla and the friend he was with “terrorists” and “Iranians”, and asked whether they were in the country illegally.

In 2020, as anti-Asian violence swelled anew, Ilangovan took comfort in learning about AAPI history and racial justice movements through a book club formed partly in response to the murder of George Floyd. “It gave me a deeper sense of identity and belonging, and helped me learn a lot of history that I was not aware of,” she said.

She realized that even in her children’s predominantly Asian school – let alone the predominantly white school she had attended growing up – Asian Americans were not reflected in the curriculum, contributing to their image as “forever foreigners” – not part of the American story, and therefore, not deserving of the same treatment as other Americans. She reached out to members of her book club, and formed Make Us Visible NJ. They were further galvanized when Stop AAPI Hate issued a 2021 report stating that one in three AAPI parents said their child had experienced a hate incident in the past school year. More than

1,500 signatures, 60 partner organizations, and several rallies later, they helped pass the historic legislation.

Another, less widely embraced response to anti-Asian hate has been the 2021 passing of the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act. It builds on the 1990 Hate Crimes Statistics Act, which required data collection “about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity” and prompted the FBI to begin publishing its annual report on hate crime statistics. The 1990 act “was a positive development, but the statistics that came out showed that law enforcement agencies weren’t really reporting incidents of violence against Asians,” said Stanley Mark, a senior staff attorney with the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. Even after 9/11, he said, many of the resulting attacks against Sikh, South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim Americans were not classified as [hate crimes](#). (As it was, recorded anti-Muslim hate crimes increased 1,600%.)

The new hate crimes act aims to fill some of those gaps by making it easier to report incidents and incentivizing local police forces to improve their data collection methods, for example through better training around how to identify hate crimes. (It also includes provisions named after Heather Heyer, the woman run over and killed by a neo-Nazi in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.) “You’re not going to find anti-Asian bias if you’re not looking for it, so this bill does help train police to look for it better,” said Mark.

However, critics say it does not address the root causes of hate, and fear the statistics will merely result in over-policing of Asian and other ethnic minority communities. “The community is divided about the role of police,” says Jo-Ann Yoo, executive director of the Asian American Federation, an umbrella organization for non-profits in NYC. In New York City, for example, people reluctant to interact with police can instead report incidents to the Commission on Human Rights, which collects data about (and sometimes acts on) bias, harassment and discrimination incidents in general – a wider array than hate crimes, which are narrowly defined.

“Dedicate resources to local communities,” wrote Stop AAPI Hate in a response to the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act. Existing grassroots efforts that have sprung up during the pandemic offer a glimpse at what locals feel is needed: new community groups, focusing on everything from mutual aid, to activism, to organizing volunteers to patrol the streets, to stoking pride in Asian American culture, have proliferated.

But the depth of the need is daunting. In New York, the most pressing issues Yoo has seen include food insecurity, financial struggle and lack of healthcare access among the many Asian workers whose industries were disproportionately affected by the pandemic (eg nail salons, restaurants, and other service-based industries). Elderly people are afraid to leave their homes and isolated by language and technological barriers to accessing social service programs. Domestic violence has increased.

Yoo also says there is widespread fear and burnout among non-profit workers themselves, who have spent the past two-plus years on the frontlines: feeding people, organizing grief circles, going door-to-door setting up Zoom for elderly people, meeting with victims of violent attacks, and struggling “to figure out what we are going to do”.

Moreover, they, and many other Asian Americans, continue their work while feeling unsafe themselves. “I get a lot of emails saying, my boss is asking us to come back to work but I’m afraid to ride the subway,” Yoo said. “I’m calling on corporations to come up with a plan to protect their staff, because the fear is very real.”

Yoo sees an enormous need for mental health services – for victims of racially motivated violence, bystanders who witness such crimes, the communities traumatized by fear, and perpetrators themselves. “Many of the assailants were homeless with severe mental illness. Where’s the help for them?” she says. (New York City’s unhoused population is at its highest level since the Great Depression, and the city, under the new Eric Adams administration, has been forcibly removing unhoused people from the city’s subways and tearing down homeless encampments.)



	<p>“This country is going through this major crisis on a global level, and it provides a breeding ground for racism, for hatred, and oppression of all sorts,” says Dr DJ Ida, executive director of the National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association. “When people are stressed, the ugliness rears its head.”</p> <p>What makes hate crimes insidious for victims, she explains, is that, while a random mugging or attack can be deeply traumatizing, there remains “a sense of, ‘I was in the wrong place at the wrong time’”. With hate crimes, by contrast, there is no escaping the situation, “because it’s escaping who we are. The psychological implications of that can be very profound.”</p> <p>Ida said that for those working in mental health, the Biden administration’s proposed 2023 budget has been a source of hope. It allocates an unprecedented billions upon billions to expand access to mental health services – for example, \$1bn to double the number of school counselors and other school health professionals over the next 10 years.</p> <p>Ultimately, many agree that whatever the federal, policy and big-picture solutions, combating hate boils down to individuals taking action. “Legislation helps, but you can’t legislate away hate. You have to deal with it on a local, day-to-day level,” said Stanley Mark, the AALDEF lawyer.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Guilty: first-ever Air Force trial of general</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/23/first-ever-us-air-force-trial-of-a-general-finds-william-cooley-guilty-of-sexual-misconduct">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/23/first-ever-us-air-force-trial-of-a-general-finds-william-cooley-guilty-of-sexual-misconduct</a>
GIST	<p>In the first-ever military trial for a general in the 75-year history of the US air force, a two-star general was found guilty Saturday of abusive sexual contact for forcibly kissing his sister-in-law after a family barbecue.</p> <p>Maj Gen William Cooley faces up to seven years in prison, a dishonorable discharge and the loss of his air force pay and benefits at a sentencing hearing scheduled for Monday.</p> <p>The woman, his brother’s wife, said in a statement that she pursued a case because her two daughters “deserve a world, deserve a system, military or otherwise, where they never have to be complicit in a lie to protect a power structure, protect a predator”.</p> <p>She said she felt accompanied throughout Cooley’s weeklong trial by the spirit of Vanessa Guillen, the soldier who was sexually harassed and killed at Fort Hood in 2020.</p> <p>“With today’s actions, I hope that the world they live in is just a little safer,” she said.</p> <p>Her attorney, Ryan Guilds, said the woman gave permission to disclose her familial relationship to Cooley so that the public had a full understanding of the case.</p> <p>An attorney for Cooley declined to comment Saturday, saying the matter remained open. He can appeal the verdict.</p> <p>During the trial, which began 18 April, military prosecutors accused Cooley of drinking heavily at a family cookout in New Mexico in 2018 and then trying to force himself on his sister-in-law, after spending years fantasizing about seducing her, they said.</p> <p>She had driven Cooley to another family home to pick up some belongings after the barbecue when he attempted to place her hand on his crotch, kissed her forcibly while pushing her into the car window, and then groped her breasts and genitals, prosecutors claimed.</p> <p>Prosecutors said Cooley admitted what happened in a note to his sister-in-law and brother, as well as in emails to himself that he later deleted.</p>

In the family note, Cooley reportedly wrote of being stunned that he hurt the couple “for his own selfish ego”. He also recounted how he saw the car ride with his sister-in-law as a chance to add another attractive woman to his list of romantic conquests, prosecutors alleged.

The air force removed Cooley as commander of the branch’s prestigious research lab at Wright-Patterson air force base in Ohio in January 2020 after the woman reported him to the branch. Military prosecutors ultimately charged him with abusive sexual contact, alleging that there were three elements to the offense: forcibly kissing the woman, groping her breasts and fondling her genitals.

Cooley pleaded not guilty and chose for his case to be heard by a judge, rather than a jury. He also opted against testifying in his own defense. His legal team argued that he did nothing more than share a consensual kiss with his sister-in-law. She did testify, sharing her account from the witness stand on Tuesday, the first day of testimony.

The military judge, Col Christina Jimenez, began deliberating Friday and on Saturday convicted Cooley of the forcible kissing while finding him not guilty of either groping charge.

The verdict is the first of its kind in the air force’s 75-year history.

Cooley’s prosecution unfolded as the US military has been working on reforms to its handling of sexual misconduct allegations in the wake of a series of scandals, such as the case of Guillen who complained that a sergeant was sexually harassing her before she was bludgeoned to death by a fellow soldier, who later killed himself.

A statement from Eric Mejia, a colonel and staff judge advocate for Air Force Material Command, to the Associated Press said Saturday’s verdict “clearly demonstrates the commitment of air force leaders to fully investigate the facts and hold airmen of any rank accountable for their actions when they fail to uphold air force standards”.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Seattle officer shoots man firing rifle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/shooting-closes-stretch-of-east-yesler-way-in-seattle/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/shooting-closes-stretch-of-east-yesler-way-in-seattle/</a>
GIST	<p>A Seattle police officer shot and wounded a man who was firing a rifle in an apartment complex in the Squire Park neighborhood early Friday morning, according to the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>Police began receiving reports of shots fired in the 1400 block of East Yesler Way at 4:34 a.m., police said.</p> <p>According to police, officers arrived and heard gunshots and people screaming. When they entered the apartment complex, they contacted the man, who was armed with a rifle.</p> <p>One officer fired at the man, striking him, <a href="#">police said on their online blotter</a>. The man then entered an apartment unit and refused to come out, police said.</p> <p>Officers were able to talk to the wounded man and he eventually surrendered, police said. He was taken into custody and then transported to Harborview Medical Center for treatment.</p> <p>Officers checked the apartment building and found no shooting victims, but did identify several apartment units with ballistic damage, police said.</p> <p>Representatives of Seattle’s Office of Police Accountability and the city Office of Inspector General responded to the scene. The shooting will be investigated by the Police Department’s Force Investigation Team.</p>

	Police expect to release video of the incident within 72 hours, per department policy.
	All lanes of Seattle's East Yesler Way were closed from 12th Avenue South to 17th Avenue South on Friday morning for just over two hours for the investigation. All lanes reopened shortly after 8 a.m., according to the Seattle Department of Transportation.
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Race-based medical formula harms Blacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/nyregion/prison-kidney-federal-courts-race.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/22/nyregion/prison-kidney-federal-courts-race.html</a>
GIST	<p>Last month, a federal judge in New Jersey considered the plea of an inmate who claimed his kidney problems made Covid-19 especially dangerous for him. The man, Maurice McPhatter, 49, was one of more than <a href="#">20,000 federal prisoners</a> who have sought early release during the pandemic. Thousands have been freed through that process.</p> <p>Mr. McPhatter, who was serving a 10-year sentence for drug trafficking, explained in a handwritten letter that he was born with only one kidney and now had a large kidney stone. Results from a blood test scored Mr. McPhatter's kidney function as low.</p> <p>But then the judge, Kevin McNulty, did something that sunk Mr. McPhatter's chances of early release.</p> <p>The prison medical records contained instructions that kidney test scores for African Americans should be adjusted, using a decades-old formula that drew a distinction between races. Mr. McPhatter is Black, and the resulting "race adjustment" put his score on the healthy side of a commonly used threshold for chronic kidney disease.</p> <p>"He is at no particular risk of a dangerous Covid infection," the judge concluded in his decision on March 23, denying Mr. McPhatter's application.</p> <p>But the formula Judge McNulty used to make his decision has been discarded by a growing number of health care institutions and experts who say it can lead to misdiagnoses and inequitable care for Black patients.</p> <p>The American Society of Nephrology recommended last year that it be replaced with a race-blind formula. LabCorp, the diagnostic laboratory company, has already <a href="#">made the switch</a>, as has the <a href="#">Department of Veterans Affairs</a> and numerous major hospital systems.</p> <p>Yet during the pandemic, the older formula took on unexpected importance in at least one setting: federal courtrooms where the race-adjusted kidney score is still employed to help judges decide whether to grant medical release to Black prisoners.</p> <p>It is unclear how many cases may have been decided on the basis of the old formula. But this week, lawyers for a Black inmate at the Hazelton federal prison complex in West Virginia, Jonte Robinson, filed a lawsuit in federal court in Washington, D.C., demanding that the Bureau of Prisons stop adjusting the kidney function scores of Black inmates. It also demands that the bureau re-evaluate the scores of thousands of Black inmates using a newer race-free formula.</p> <p>"Jonte is demanding that the Bureau of Prisons cease using the race-based formula and take steps to rectify the harms suffered by Black individuals," his lawyer, Juyoun Han, said in a statement. Adjusting the kidney-function scores of Black inmates amounts to "race-based discrimination," she added. A spokeswoman for the Bureau of Prisons, Randilee Giamusso, declined to comment on the lawsuit. But she said the Bureau of Prisons "is in the process of transitioning" to the newer, race-blind formula. "We anticipate that the transition will be completed in the next few months."</p>

The debate over the kidney formula is part of a broader reckoning over the role of race in medicine. The race of patients is incorporated [into an array of formulas](#) that doctors use to evaluate data about everything from lung function to whether to recommend C-sections.

The history of these formulas — and how race crept into them — is varied. Some can be traced [to blatantly racist origins](#). Others began as well-intentioned attempts to incorporate data from Black patients into diagnostic formulas.

For decades, the kidney function formula has involved measuring the blood levels of creatinine — a waste product produced by muscles. Higher creatinine levels suggest that the kidneys are struggling, translating into a lower kidney-function score.

One of the early kidney formulas relied on data from 249 white men. Then in 1999, a [group of researchers](#) proposed a new formula that would include data from Black patients, men and women.

The group's data — as have some subsequent studies — indicated that African-American adults tended to have higher creatinine levels than white Americans — even when actual kidney health is similar. Theories abound as to why. Some researchers speculate that variation in diet or muscle mass might explain the higher levels. Others have pointed to demographics: Many of the Black participants in one key study [were poor and in ill health](#).

Armed with this data, the researchers created a new formula that called for multiplying the kidney-function scores of Black patients by a factor of 1.2. They reasoned that the resulting higher kidney function score would be more accurate, and reduce the likelihood of overdiagnosing kidney disease in Black people.

The medical establishment by and large agreed, and the formula became standard for many lab companies and hospitals.

But critics said the higher kidney function scores [masked actual kidney disease](#) in Black patients, delaying referrals to nephrologists or preventing patients from getting onto kidney-transplant lists.

In recent years, that criticism has grown louder as a younger generation of doctors and kidney experts has argued that the race-based formula perpetuates [a history of racism in medicine](#). They have said that focusing on a patient's race conceals the socioeconomic, environmental and [genetic](#) factors that can contribute to disease.

"Race should not be used to make any biological inferences about individuals," a group of doctors [wrote last year](#) in a scientific journal about the kidney formula, which they said might contribute to racial stereotypes and health inequities.

Using race to score kidney function is especially fraught because kidney disease disproportionately affects African Americans, who are more [than three times as likely](#) as white Americans to have kidney failure and need dialysis or a transplant. That is partly because diabetes and hypertension — which African Americans suffer at high rates — can increase the risk of kidney disease.

Still, some kidney specialists have defended the contested formulas that use race adjustments, saying they tend to provide more accurate measures of kidney function than those that are race-blind. These specialists assert that ignoring higher baseline creatinine levels in many Black Americans will lead to over-diagnosing kidney disease in them, limiting treatment options for other illnesses. Patients with low kidney-function scores are also often ineligible for, or given lower dosages of, certain lifesaving drugs, including antibiotics, chemotherapy and [diabetes medication](#). That's because certain drugs may prove too damaging to a patient's kidneys, [among other dangers](#).

[Despite some dissent](#), there has been a growing medical consensus that adjusting kidney function scores according to a patient's race no longer makes sense when other formulas that do not include race are available.

"It just has become unacceptable now to have race in the equation," noted Dr. Neil Powe, who was co-chair of the task force of the National Kidney Foundation and the American Society of Nephrology, which recently recommended discarding the race-based algorithm and replacing it with the new race-blind one.

This debate seems to have hardly reached federal judges who [were inundated over the past two years](#) with requests from inmates for early medical release because of Covid-19. Given the crowded conditions and limited access to medical care inside prisons, the [stakes were high](#).

A review of medical release cases suggests that many judges ruled on the basis of spotty medical records — sometimes little more than a few blood tests — and often without input from doctors who might have examined the inmate. Medical records before incarceration were often unavailable.

To make decisions, many judges turned to the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where they found a long list of comorbidities that made Covid-19 especially dangerous, including diabetes, obesity and chronic kidney disease. Sometimes their rulings turned partly on whether an inmate had any of these risk factors.

It's unclear exactly how many of these prison cases turned on the question of kidney disease. But [one attorney's](#) survey of federal release orders indicated that kidney disease came up dozens of times. The C.D.C. estimates that some 37 million Americans have chronic kidney disease, and that most are unaware of it.

In the case involving Mr. Robinson, the inmate who filed the lawsuit Wednesday, a kidney-function score that had been race-adjusted was clearly a factor in the judge's review. Mr. Robinson has served 17 years of a 25 year sentence for crimes including aiding and abetting a double murder.

"Where I am getting hung up and have concerns is with respect to whether Mr. Robinson does in fact have chronic kidney disease," Randolph D. Moss, a federal judge in Washington, D.C., said last year during a telephone hearing.

Mr. Robinson's raw kidney function scores ranged from 56 to 58, and a cutoff point of 60 is often used to diagnose kidney disease. A nurse who worked in the federal prison system told the judge that because Mr. Robinson is Black, his score needed to be adjusted upward, which would place it above the threshold.

Judge Moss declined to release Mr. Robinson, now 40. In a decision written in April 2021, he acknowledged that the Bureau of Prison's use of the race-based adjustment "may be the subject of dispute." But he said he was left without clarity on whether Mr. Robinson even had kidney disease.

"Absent further evidence, the Court cannot rely on the C.D.C.'s caution regarding chronic kidney disease (which Robinson may or may not have) alone," [the judge wrote](#).

In an appeal filed last year, Mr. Robinson's lawyer pointed out the racial consequence of the old formula: "If Mr. Robinson were white his medical data would indicate that he was suffering from chronic kidney disease."

He lost the appeal.

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HEADLINE	04/23 Geographical barriers: jail, pretrial bail
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/getting-stuck-in-jail-before-trial-may-depend-on-where-in-washington-you-live/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/getting-stuck-in-jail-before-trial-may-depend-on-where-in-washington-you-live/</a>

Ten years ago, while driving to her nephew's birthday party, Amber Letchworth was pulled over by an Asotin County sheriff's deputy near the town of Clarkston. Letchworth says at the time, she was a 20-year-old college student in the midst of a mental health and addiction crisis following the death of her grandmother. On the floor of the car, the deputy found a dirty baggie. It contained meth.

Letchworth was taken to Asotin County Jail, in the southeast corner of Washington. She stayed there for the next couple weeks, unable to pay for bail, and with no access to pretrial services that exist today in many other jurisdictions meant to keep unconvicted defendants out of jail.

In that short amount of time, she lost her housing and access to a car. Feeling the pressure to get out of jail quickly, she pleaded guilty to the felony drug possession charge — a charge that's since been vacated due to a [state Supreme Court decision in 2021](#) that ruled Washington's felony drug possession statute was unconstitutional.

It spurred a downward spiral for Letchworth. She was homeless when she left the jail, and as her drug and alcohol addiction issues worsened, it led to more arrests and more jail time.

Today, Letchworth is a law school student at Gonzaga University, co-founder of the Revive Center for Returning Citizens and a legal liaison for [I Did the Time](#), an advocacy group working to help former inmates. But she still wonders how those dark years of her life would have been different if after that arrest, she had been let out of jail, able to keep her housing and referred to mental health or addiction treatment.

"What if I would have gotten pretrial services the first time?" she asks.

Letchworth is part of a movement of advocates, judges and public defenders in Washington pushing to release more defendants from jail while they await trial. They argue that alternative measures such as drug and alcohol testing, electronic home monitoring, and referrals to behavioral health treatment can help lift those accused of crimes out of the legal system. Law enforcement and prosecutors have been slow to embrace the idea, fearing that people released from jail while awaiting trial will commit more crimes in the community.

As it is now, the availability and cost of these pretrial services in Washington depends heavily on where an alleged crime occurs. Many rural counties in Eastern Washington and along the Olympic Peninsula don't have a pretrial services program at all, filling their jails with defendants awaiting trial. Among those that do have such programs, most jurisdictions contacted by InvestigateWest require the accused to pay fees associated with their pretrial release — a barrier that disproportionately punishes poorer defendants and prevents some from being released from jail.

It's what Ali Hohman, director of legal services for the nonprofit Washington Defender Association, calls "justice by geography."

"Where you're at in the state will dictate your bail amount, and it will dictate your ability to access pretrial services," Hohman says.

### **Growing movement**

The movement to eliminate geographical barriers in bail and pretrial reform extends far beyond Washington. But as other states have led the way in upheaving their systems, Washington has been slow to follow suit.

New Jersey passed a law in 2017 that essentially eliminated cash bail, which forces defendants to post a certain amount of money set by the judge for their release. Despite concerns that released defendants would commit more crimes and skip court dates, the data indicates that hasn't happened. Recidivism and court appearance rates have stayed consistent. And importantly for reform advocates, fewer defendants are stuck in jail just because they can't afford bail. Since then, other states like Illinois have eliminated cash bail while creating a statewide centralized pretrial services office.



That's the kind of model that may allow defendants in Washington's rural counties to still have access to pretrial services, says state Rep. Roger Goodman, D-Kirkland. But right now, Washington is only in the beginning stages of exploring such options, says Goodman, who has served as chair of the House Public Safety Committee and has pushed for reform.

"We are by no means a model or a showcase for how pretrial services should be provided," Goodman says. "We really don't have a robust system of pretrial services in our state compared to some other states."

Right now, Washington gives local control to jurisdictions to attempt their own reforms. Yakima County in 2016 began releasing low-risk offenders while providing pretrial services, and a study on the program found similar results to what New Jersey found: More people were released, there was less racial disparity in those kept in jail, and most did not go on to commit new crimes.

Other jurisdictions don't have the resources to create those programs. Several years ago, the Legislature commissioned a task force to examine the issue. It released a report in 2019 that found gaps in the availability of pretrial services, most notably that 21 counties had no pretrial service programs at all.

Even where pretrial services existed, jails were still filled with people awaiting trial. Nationwide, two-thirds of all local jail inmates were awaiting trial, according to federal statistics, and Black and Native American people were jailed at much higher rates than white people. But in Washington's largest counties, pretrial defendants in 2019 made up an even larger portion of the jail population. More than three-quarters of people in jails in King, Pierce and Spokane counties were there for a crime they hadn't been convicted of, indicating pretrial reform efforts were still in early stages.

Those figures have been dramatically altered during the pandemic, with jails releasing defendants to prevent COVID-19 outbreaks. King County, for instance, has mostly stopped jailing people accused of misdemeanors. Seattle and King County have since seen a small increase in crime, particularly violent crime, but those are trends in line with the rest of the country.

Advocates and public defenders like Hohman hope that the pandemic forcing counties to release people from jail shows that pretrial reform is possible.

"The world didn't go to hell in a handbasket," Hohman says.

### **"Piecemeal" approach**

Rural counties have struggled to manage pretrial services during the pandemic.

Of the counties identified as having pretrial programs by the state task force report in 2019, some of those contacted by InvestigateWest have lost those programs entirely. Asotin County Superior Court where Letchworth was jailed started a program to monitor defendants released pretrial several years ago, but County Clerk McKenzie Campbell says it was manned by one person who left the position months ago.

"I don't believe it's being actively offered to people," Campbell says.

Less populated counties that do have a pretrial services program still face logistical challenges. Okanogan County District Judge Charles Short says if someone charged with a DUI is released on the condition that they receive alcohol monitoring, they may not be able to afford the testing device.

"We're dealing with a lot of people that don't have a lot of income. That can create an issue if they're required to do alcohol monitoring or electronic home monitoring," Short says.

And if the defendants don't have transportation, they may have difficulty making court dates, especially in an expansive county like Okanogan in North Central Washington. It could take hours for those on the

outskirts of the county to make it to the courthouse. The county started offering remote hearings during the pandemic, but Short notes that many Okanogan residents don't have internet access.

In Whitman County, District Judge John Hart says he can release someone under the condition that they get an alcohol ankle monitor, but the company that sets them up is in Spokane County, so it costs extra due to transportation costs. That can be prohibitive for low-income defendants. Ideally, Hart hopes, that's a cost that the government can pay for.

"I believe it's both a worthy allocation of resources, but also an important one to make sure an individual's released on the least restrictive alternative affording them and those around them safety," Hart says. "It's also cost effective."

The pretrial task force report recommends that the government bear the cost of services rather than the accused. Some jurisdictions do cover those costs, either in full or in part. In Seattle Municipal Court, there is no cost to the accused person for pretrial services unless they need a device under electronic home monitoring or alcohol monitoring, in which case the court will subsidize the cost for low-income defendants.

The city of Spokane, through money that comes from grants, funds services such as alcohol or home monitoring. Spokane Municipal Judge Mary Logan, who was on the statewide task force, says it can cost more than \$100 per day to keep someone in jail, so funding a home monitoring device for \$14 per day is well worth it.

But with each jurisdiction left to make these decisions, the current "piecemeal" approach to pretrial services across the state is inevitable, she says. And county leaders may not be on board with reforming the system in the first place, fearing it will result in dangerous offenders being let out on the streets with no consequences.

"All of a sudden politics gets involved," Logan says.

### **Going forward**

When the pretrial task force report came out in 2019, it made a series of recommendations on top of the idea that governments should bear the cost of pretrial services.

It also recommended that courts set up reminders for defendants to reduce their risk of missing court dates, that courts make more referrals to mental or behavioral health treatment, and that courts consider transportation support for defendants to make appointments.

But at the time, the report didn't make waves across the state.

"It really just put into black and white what I always suspected with the justice by geography," says Hohman, with the Washington Defender Association, an organization advocating for public defenders. "There wasn't any sort of collective change in the winds from what I could tell."

Jaime Hawk, legal strategy director for the Washington Campaign for Smart Justice at the ACLU of Washington, authored a report in 2016 calling for major changes to the pretrial system. The report argued that pretrial detention not only harms those who are jailed in their personal lives, but makes them more likely to be convicted of low-level misdemeanors because they feel more pressure to take a plea deal and get out.

"As a former public defender, when my clients were released pretrial and I was able to work with them and their families, and they were able to keep their jobs and housing ... my ability to get a better outcome for them was nine times out of 10," Hawk says.

	<p>Hawk says she's working with academic researchers to figure out what can be learned from keeping misdemeanor defendants out of jail during the pandemic. But for now, she feels confident in her position that counties should be offering pretrial services that are paid for by the county, not the defendant.</p> <p>"There's a lot that can be done at the county level," she says.</p> <p>Goodman, the Kirkland lawmaker, calls the recommendations from the task force in 2019 "anemic." He thinks that as long as there isn't a unified court system and pretrial services program in Washington, you're going to see disparities across jurisdictions.</p> <p>But a statewide change like that could take years, Goodman says. There's still more data to study on what programs are most effective. Judges, he says, are "arguing with themselves" over who's to blame for confining too many people in jail.</p> <p>"As far as any reform of pretrial policy, we are a ways away," Goodman says.</p> <p>That change, however, can't come soon enough for people like Letchworth. While she's been able to move on from her arrests in Asotin County a decade ago, she still works with people every day who could benefit from a pretrial system that doesn't default to jailing them.</p> <p>"The people that need the services the most," Letchworth says, "are denied from the gate."</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/22 Gig Harbor police warn about phone scam</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article260557562.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/g-news/article260557562.html</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The Gig Harbor Police Department is warning residents about a common scam.</p> <p>This week the agency received two reports that someone is calling people posing as the GHPD asking for money.</p> <p>"It's like many other phone scams going on, where they call up and try to intimidate somebody into sending them money, usually in the form of gift cards," Gig Harbor Police Chief Kelly Busey said.</p> <p>According to the reports the scammer is posing as "Gig Harbor Police Department Warrants Division" and saying that there is an outstanding arrest, a warrant out and that officers are on their way over unless the person can post bail over the phone, Busey said.</p> <p>"They tell them to get them some form of gift card and give the number over the phone ... . One of the people that called us today said she received this call and she had never even been to Gig Harbor before," Busey said April 19.</p> <p>The GHPD announced via social media that it is not their officers calling. The call is not coming from a blocked number.</p> <p>When GHPD officers call the number back it goes to a voicemail saying: "You have reached the Gig Harbor Police Department Warrant Department," and asks the caller to leave a name and number, Busey said.</p> <p>According to Busey this type of scam has been going on for years, but with the recent reports, the GHPD is reminding people to protect themselves and not fall for it.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/22 Thurston Co. corrections deputy arrested</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/thurston-county-corrections-deputy-fired-arrested-patronizing-prostitute/XAUW7EYFP5DVPEYQBXZSIL3LJY/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/thurston-county-corrections-deputy-fired-arrested-patronizing-prostitute/XAUW7EYFP5DVPEYQBXZSIL3LJY/</a>
GIST	<p>A corrections deputy with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) was fired Thursday after being arrested while trying to meet with a woman to exchange money for sex, the sheriff's office announced Friday.</p> <p>On March 31, TCSO got a complaint from a woman who had used the jail visitation and messaging system to contact her significant other who was incarcerated.</p> <p>The woman said that she had received solicitations for sex from an encrypted email.</p> <p>The emails had information that only would have been available to someone who had access to the jail visitation and messaging system, but detectives weren't able to find the source of the emails due to the level of encryption.</p> <p>With the woman's permission, detectives used her email to communicate with the person behind the encrypted email.</p> <p>Detectives arranged a meeting time and location with that person with the intent to exchange money for sexual acts.</p> <p>On Thursday at around 7:45 p.m., detectives arrested the person after he arrived at the meeting location in the 8200 block of Quinault Drive Northeast in Lacey.</p> <p>He was identified as a 33-year-old corrections deputy with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office who had been hired in December 2021.</p> <p>The man was taken into custody and brought to the Thurston County Jail. There, he was fired and booked for computer trespassing in the first degree and patronizing a prostitute.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Edmonds police shooting turns deadly</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/north-sound-news/officers-involved-edmonds-shooting/OD5X45ZV5FEUBND3SJKVGZSCXE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/north-sound-news/officers-involved-edmonds-shooting/OD5X45ZV5FEUBND3SJKVGZSCXE/</a>
GIST	<p>An investigation is underway after a shooting involving Edmonds officers turned fatal on Friday.</p> <p>Police were called to the Americas Best Value Inn, located in the 22100 block of Highway 99, for a report of a domestic violence incident.</p> <p>Police said a man armed with a knife lunged at officers, and an officer used a Taser stun gun on him. However, he continued to attack, so another officer fired their service weapon.</p> <p>The man was taken to Harborview Medical Center in critical condition, where he died, law enforcement said.</p> <p>Mary Emily, the man's girlfriend, told KIRO 7 a mental breakdown led to a two-hour standoff before the police opened fire.</p> <p>"They shot him instead of getting him help," she said.</p> <p>Emily said the incident was not rooted in violence but in the trauma of mental illness.</p> <p>"Everything he said, if a mental health worker were actually speaking with him, they would've been able to identify that this man was actually suicidal," she said.</p>

	<p>Emily said she was staying in the room next to her boyfriend when he had a breakdown, threatening to take his own life.</p> <p>That prompted the standoff.</p> <p>“I listened and he tapped on the wall with a knife and he said, ‘mama, I’m putting it up to my throat, I’m gonna do it,’” she told KIRO 7.</p> <p>Following that, she said the entire floor was evacuated.</p> <p>Immediately afterward, there was gunfire.</p> <p>“They didn’t even try to talk him down. They didn’t do anything. They just shot him,” she said.</p> <p>Although Emily insists her boyfriend was not a threat, she said he likely put up a struggle with police because he was afraid of being arrested.</p> <p>“He was scared that if he came out, he would go back into the system that was not just to him,” said Emily.</p> <p>The incident is the first officer-involved shooting in Edmonds since 2013.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Multiple Agency Response Team is now investigating.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/22 Deputies: shooting near Arlington; 1 injured</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-shooting-near-arlington/CS72IE76NNEHXE3TZO6OAP2ZM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/1-injured-shooting-near-arlington/CS72IE76NNEHXE3TZO6OAP2ZM/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Snohomish County sheriff’s deputies are investigating after a woman was shot in the leg on Friday, the sheriff’s office tweeted.</p> <p>Just after 1 p.m., deputies were called to the scene of a shooting in the 15500 block of 67th Avenue Northeast near Arlington.</p> <p>When they arrived, they found a 33-year-old woman who had been shot once in the leg.</p> <p>She was transported to a hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>The sheriff’s office says that several adults were involved in the incident.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>04/23 Businesses: downtown Seattle crime</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/efforts-to-clean-up-crime-in-downtown-seattle-continue-business-owners-still-see-threats">https://komonews.com/news/local/efforts-to-clean-up-crime-in-downtown-seattle-continue-business-owners-still-see-threats</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>The owner of the popular Piroshky Piroshky Bakery in Seattle said she was held up at knifepoint this week on 1st Avenue near Pike and Stewart.</p> <p>Olga Sagan and many others are worried about ongoing crime in Downtown Seattle, especially in trouble spots like the 3rd Avenue corridor.</p> <p>KOMO News talked to people who live and work in the area about the changes they are seeing and asked local leaders what more can be done.</p> <p>Some of the trouble on a section of 3rd Avenue has cleared out thanks to the Seattle Police Department mobile precinct and extra police officers there. But many people say there's a lot more work needed.</p>

On Twitter, Olga Sagan, owner of Piroshky Piroshky shared that she was threatened with a knife in Downtown Seattle.

Sagan closed down her shop on 3rd Avenue because of all the drugs and crime directly in front of her business.

On 3rd and Pike at the Melbourne Tower, restaurant and café owner I-Miun Liu has his office headquarters. He has seen all the trouble.

“It’s people literally tripping on drugs, human feces, fights, shoplifting,” said Liu. “I did see a woman there tripping out on drugs, she was convulsing. She was shaking around and people walk by like it’s a regular thing.”

Even though a mobile precinct and several police units are now posted in front of his building, Liu is still concerned.

“Safety is number one reason why long term I can’t see us being there,” said Liu. “My main question is ‘what’s the long-term plan for sustainability?’ The policies that have been enacted over the years have actually led to this. I don’t see any changes in the policy. I just see some clean-up.”

Alexander Butowicz is the owner of Iron and Oak Protective Services.

His staff patrols 3rd Avenue through a program with the Metropolitan Improvement District.

“When we first started, we had anywhere from 8-10 reported incidents per day. That could be anything from medical emergencies to criminal matters. We’re now down to 1-2 incidents every 2-3 days. It doesn’t mean that incidents have been resolved completely, but the area is improving,” said Butowicz. “It’s because of the investments being made both publicly and privately.”

People like Olga Sagan worry about crime returning and the mobile precinct going away.

KOMO News asked Councilman Andrew Lewis and Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell about it.

“Mayor Harrell has returned significant police presence to 3rd Avenue. But what we’ve seen is that is not going to be sufficient. It’s helpful. It’s important that they’re there. But, added support is going to have to come from making physical improvements to 3rd Avenue. It has to come by way of extending the Just Care Programs so police and social workers can make referrals.”

A spokesman for the Mayor’s office told KOMO News that Mayor Harrell is working to make Downtown Seattle safe through a number of means. He has implemented some critical first steps including a mobile precinct, more officers on site, and temporarily closing the bus stop near 3rd and Pine Street.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/23 Shootout Seattle Chinatown-ID; no injuries</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/two-men-arrested-following-friday-night-shootout-in-seattle">https://komonews.com/news/local/two-men-arrested-following-friday-night-shootout-in-seattle</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - In Seattle's Chinatown-International District, a bullet nearly hit a woman while she was heading home from work Friday night.</p> <p>The shooting happened around 10 p.m. on Rainier Ave South and Weller Street.</p> <p>As many as 20 shots were fired.</p> <p>According to police, it started with an attempted robbery on S. Lane Street and ended several blocks away.</p>



It's hard to believe that a driver wasn't hurt by the bullet that went straight through her windshield.

"She's still in shock about what had happened. The bullet was right where her head, where her body was," said Nghia Bui. He is the manager of Hello Em Việt Coffee & Roastery and the woman's neighbor.

"She's waiting at the stop sign and they started shooting at each other. One of the guys was trying to use her car as a shield or try and hide behind her car. And other guys kept shooting," said Bui.

Workers at Humble Pie say they heard as many as 20 shots.

"My employee said there were at least 17 shots fired in quick succession close by. They locked themselves into the kitchen as they're supposed to do and called police as they're supposed to do," said Brian Solazzi, the owner of Humble Pie. "Most of the shooting here happened here east of Rainier."

Brian Solazzi was concerned that the shooting was connected to the growing homeless encampment on South Weller Street.

Police say the shooting was connected to an attempted robbery Friday night a few blocks away in the 1600 block of South Lane Street.

The suspected robber held up a man inside a business and took off. Police say the person who robbed chased him for more than a block. The two people fired shots at each other. Police arrived and eventually, both were arrested. Fortunately, no one was hurt by the gunfire.

Officers recovered two guns from the scene along with 20 fired cartridge casings. Police say the robbery suspect had an active DOC warrant and was booked for assault 1 and robbery 1. The other man was booked for reckless endangerment, unlawful carrying of a firearm and property damage.

As for the woman in her car who was nearly hit, "she could have gotten killed. She's a mom," said Bui.

Business owners on South Weller Street say they're alarmed by the crime in the area. They're asking city leaders why illegal activity including drug sales, drug use, and prostitution, is allowed to continue on their street.

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HEADLINE	<b>04/22 Tacoma police arrest street racing organizer</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-police-18-year-old-responsible-for-numerous-street-racing-events-arrested">https://www.q13fox.com/news/tacoma-police-18-year-old-responsible-for-numerous-street-racing-events-arrested</a>
GIST	<p><b>TACOMA, Wash.</b> - Tacoma Police have arrested an 18-year-old man they say is <a href="#">responsible for "numerous illegal street racing events"</a> throughout King and Pierce Counties.</p> <p>Tacoma PD, along with Kent police, arrested the suspect at a home in Puyallup on Friday.</p> <p>He will first be sent to King County for charges related to incidents within their jurisdiction, according to <a href="#">Tacoma Police</a>.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing, particularly for charging incidents that occurred in Pierce County.</p> <p>In Tacoma, <a href="#">there was an 8.5% increase in 911 calls for street racing in 2021 in comparison to 2020</a>, according to police numbers.</p> <p>In the first two months of 2022, the numbers show there were 180 calls for street racing. Looking at the same time period of 2020 there were 84 calls. That is a 114% percent increase.</p>

Earlier this week, the Tacoma City Council [voted to crack down on street racing by going after people watching the illegal events](#).

The council unanimously passed a new law that makes spectators a target for arrest. People found guilty can face a month in jail, a \$1,000 fine, or both.

Originally, the penalty was up to three months in jail, but [the council modified the language of the new law](#).

Tacoma Police say so far this year there have been 28 street-racing related arrests in Pierce County.

FOX 13 News spoke to a 16-year-old involved in the car scene in Tacoma. He did not want to use his name or show his face.

"Although, taking over the streets might be illegal and stuff. We're not there to harm, or terrorize or do anything like that. We're just there to have fun," he said.

He said he sees a lot of the violence in the city and feels the car scene is an outlet for people to stay away from getting into that kind of trouble.

"Most of the murders that happen are from people in my age group. Like, my peers are doing this, and, you know, it's heartbreaking to see that," he said.

He says if there was a sanctioned space for this kind of activity, he believes there would be a lot less illegal car meet-ups on city streets.

"That would just be better than just trying to set examples out of us and take us away from what we love and what we enjoy," he said.

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